

incorporating Arts Digest / SEPTEMBER 1956 / 75 cents

**SPECIAL  
AMERICAN  
NUMBER**

# ARTS

**FREEDOM OF ART:  
AN OPEN LETTER TO  
PRESIDENT EISENHOWER**

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
SIDNEY GEIST, CLEMENT GREENBERG, ADA  
LOUISE HUXTABLE, LESLIE KATZ, RICHARD  
STANKIEWICZ, JERON ROUNDS and others.

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# ARTS

Vol. 30, No. 12, /75 cents

SEPTEMBER 1956

## CONTRIBUTORS



**Leslie Katz**, who writes about Eakins in this issue in the first of a series of articles on American painters, has contributed fiction and essays to *New Directions*, *Partisan Review*, *New Mexico Quarterly* and other publications. He was born in Baltimore, Maryland, and attended Black Mountain College and the New School for Social Research. He is just completing

his first book, a novelistic account of a trip to Europe.

Sculptor and critic, **Sidney Geist** was a regular contributor to *Art Digest* during 1953-1954 and has written for other art publications. He has exhibited in many exhibitions here and abroad, and currently he is working on a book on the sculpture of the twentieth century.



Photo: Anita Ventura.

Well known as a critic of movies, literature and the theatre, **Vernon Young** also demonstrates in this issue his skill as an art critic and cultural analyst in writing about the paintings of the old West. His articles and reviews have appeared in *The Yale Review*, *Hudson Review*, *Accent*, *New World Writing*, *Southwest Review*, *Kenyon Review* and many other periodicals. He has also written two novels, and is currently at work on a book about the movies.

**Clement Greenberg** is the author of a study of Miró, a paperback volume on Matisse, and numerous essays on contemporary art in *Partisan Review*, *Commentary* and other magazines. A long article by him will appear in *ARTS* during the coming season.

**Alfred Werner** contributes regularly to *ARTS*; readers will recall his article on Suzanne Valadon in the May, 1956, number.

Poet and critic, **Kenneth Rexroth** lives in San Francisco. He has long been interested in the art of the Orient, and his most recent book is a volume of translations, *One Hundred Japanese Poems*, published by *New Directions*.

**FORTHCOMING:** "Homage to Cézanne": essays by Patrick Heron and Alfred Werner on the fiftieth anniversary of the painter's death . . . Basil Taylor, art critic for *The Spectator* in London, writes about "Masters of British Painting" at the Museum of Modern Art . . . a profile of Frederick Franck by Dorothy Gees Seckler . . . color features on the *Zacks Collection* of modern paintings and the *Brooklyn Museum's* show of religious art.

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## ON THE COVER



The train shed of the first Grand Central Depot in New York, designed by R. G. Hatfield and built on the site of the present terminal by Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt in 1869-71 (New York Public Library Picture Collection). For details on this and other pioneering structures in nineteenth-century America see Ada Louise Huxtable's "Architectural Frontiers," pages 24-31.

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## ARTS

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## LETTERS

### "TWELVE AMERICANS"

To the Editor:

It is not so long ago that a man could argue that, since the plastic arts have to do with the representation of substantial bodies, the genre of the painted landscape without figures in it is really an evasion of the artist's responsibility: he had merely created a situation which is always waiting for something to occupy it, a background with the real subject left out. Probably there are still a lot of people who feel that way about landscape painting, but they are eccentric and square, and among those who are seriously interested in the possibilities of the plastic arts that particular view is not given much attention.

Leo Steinberg, whose writing is usually both lucid and judicious, I find gets tangled up in a fancier version of this argument in his review of the "Twelve Americans" at the Museum of Modern Art, specifically in his remarks on the painting of Ernest Briggs and Sam Francis. He sees their pictures as "decoration"—"They create a dream with no presence in it, an empty scene, a backdrop . . ." etc.

To defend his judgment that the work of these two painters is decoration, Steinberg isolates two realms which he says must pervade an abstract picture, namely, the "I" and the "it," "protagonist and a scene of action," which by some artistic hide-and-seek, if carried off successfully, create the illusion of reality.

These notions seem to me to be a curious hankering after a traditional representational picture which has a recognizable objective content within a recognizable space. If one translates his terms, the "I" and the "it," "protagonist and a scene of action," into their plastic correlates, i.e. the object and its spatial ambience, it becomes clear what Steinberg is nostalgic for.

Even if we accept his categories as equivalents for the image and the symbol—the image having the function of the "I" and the symbol the function of the "it"—Steinberg's bifurcation is still confusing since it is logically possible to speak of both the image and the symbol as having identical functions in a work of art at the same moment and in the same place. Not only is it possible, but I believe that the distinguishing feature of free-form painting is precisely that the image and the symbol have no discrete existential value, that they are coexistent in time and coincide in space. The formal aspect of the abstract work of art is this phenomenon of both the "I" and the "it" revealed as a two-in-one occasion or event.

The difference between the image and the symbol is not radical. The birth of the image is always the promise that it may be instated as a symbol, in the public sense. Every authentic image, a subjective phenomenon, is implicitly symbolic. An accredited symbol is no more than the image which has become validated in the cultural process; it has more or less public significance because it has been around longer, gained recognition and acquired status. And after a while they all become a little stale, except for conservatives.

Picasso said, "The artist imposes his vision on the public." The subjective imagery of the artistic sensibility acquires its symbolic status not through a process of separating out the "I" from the "it" in individual works, but through the artist's insistence in his work on the "given."



even if to some beholders it appears to be all "I" and no "it," or vice versa.

I am not wholly familiar with the new paintings of Sam Francis. Steinberg's impression of them as "backdrops" may be valid for those which appear in the "Twelve Americans" show. Concerning Ernest Briggs' paintings I can speak with more confidence—and I can assure Steinberg that they are not "decoration." There is more to them than meets the casual eye, and if he will go back to take another look maybe he too will see more than "it."

Hubert Crehan  
San Francisco,  
California

#### THE STABLE SHOW

To the Editor:

Hilton Kramer, in his recent article on the Stable Show [June], registers certain disappointments about that show, but I can't help feeling that he went to that show with his disappointments ready-made. To say it plainly, I think he simply can't stand abstract work in particular, and is shy of the new in art in general.

He deplores the fact, for example, that while this show raised "the expectation of learning something about the artists which we hadn't known before," "most of the artists one knows . . . present us with an all too familiar spectacle." And yet this very quality of newness, of "Change in style or content," is not to be found in the four artists Mr. Kramer names as his "favorites"; three of them have been before the public for some time, and their work in this show is in a manner which has remained the same for as long as anyone can remember. Of course, even Mr. Kramer's favorites may be suffering from the lack of adventurousness which he attributes to "most" of the exhibits, but among the rest it is surprising that he could not find anything new that might draw his acclaim. No. I think his generosity toward the new is only a seeming one . . .

Generosity, to be sure, is not a critical aim, but one cannot help discussing it when the critic assumes its attitudes without really partaking of it. . . .

The present Stable Show has 131 works in it, of which a quarter are figurative or representational in result or intention by the most liberal interpretation of these terms; the remaining three quarters are in various modes of abstraction. Of the fourteen reproductions which illustrate Mr. Kramer's article, ten are figurative and four are abstractions. The four works which he designates as his favorites are, without prejudice to their excellence, figurative. Now, if Mr. Kramer can call this show "a cross-section of our artistic activity" (which it is not) and give his approval to figurative works in an exhibition so predominantly abstract, we can only draw two conclusions: either he has a predilection for figurative work, to which he is entitled, or figurative art is in a healthy state and abstraction in a sad state, and he should have aired the point. . . .

Just as he refuses the nod to certain artists simply because they have returned to figuration, I can't help refusing it to him for simply picking favorites or stating cryptically that one sculptor's work is "different in kind from most American sculpture." Not that I think Mr. Kramer incapable of expressing his ideas. I do

*continued on page 63*



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brought £29,000 (\$81,200).

### NEW HOME FOR PLAZA

The Plaza Art Galleries, marking the start of their forty-second season, will shortly open the doors of their new permanent quarters at 406 East 79th Street, New York City. If renovations are completed according to schedule, an important sale will be held during the third week of September.

In moving to the new address the firm becomes a part of the Antique and Art Center, which comprises two exhibition floors, a salesroom, warehouse facilities and the business offices of the Galleries.

Established by Edward P. O'Reilly, Sr., whose two sons head the organization, the Plaza Art Galleries have carried on business for more than four decades under the same name. The original quarters of the firm, at 9 East 59th Street, were a familiar landmark in the art and antique world.

### AUCTION CALENDAR

**September 21 & 22, at 1:45 p.m.** Parke-Bernet Galleries. Continental, American and other furniture and decorations, from the estate of the late Mrs. E. Dudley Haskell, of New Canaan, Connecticut, and property of other owners. In addition to furniture the sale will include German and other cabinet glassware, table porcelain and table glass. Exhibition from September 15.

**September 28 & 29, at 1:45 p.m.** Parke-Bernet Galleries. Georgian and Regency furniture and decorations, property of Mrs. Robert G. Payne, New York, sold by her order, and property of other owners. In addition to the English furniture the sale will include a number of French pieces. Also, Georgian silver, table glassware and porcelains, as well as a small group of Chinese art. Exhibition from September 22.

**October 3 & 4, at 1:45 p.m.** Parke-Bernet Galleries. Chinese art, the property of various owners. Exhibition from September 29.

**October 5 & 6, at 1:45 p.m.** Parke-Bernet Galleries. Georgian and Regency furniture and decorations, from various sources, including property of Yale Robert Burge, New York. Also included are Vieux Paris and other porcelains, engravings, wallpaper panels and Oriental rugs. Exhibition from September 29.



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## PEOPLE IN THE ARTS:



Jerome Mellquist



Stephen Greene



Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

**Jerome Mellquist** (above), ARTS's Contributing Editor in Europe, has been named Art Consultant to the *Universal Human History* being published under the auspices of UNESCO. The appointment is effective January 1. Author of *The Emergence of an American Art* and editor of *Paul Rosenfeld: Voyager in the Arts*, Mr. Mellquist is now at work on a history of Durand-Ruel, the art firm responsible for the first important diffusion of works by the impressionists.

**Stephen Greene** (above) has been appointed **Princeton University's first artist in residence**. He will be a Junior Fellow with the Council of the Humanities and Critic in Residence in the Department of Art and Archeology. Mr. Greene, who had

his fourth one-man show last November at the Grace Borgenicht Gallery, was represented a few months ago in the Museum of Modern Art's "Recent Drawings, U.S.A." Winner of a Prix de Rome, he has taught at Washington University, the University of Indiana, New York University and the Brooklyn Museum.

An honorary degree of Doctor of Laws has been conferred on the eminent architect **Ludwig Mies van der Rohe** (above) by the North Carolina State College in Raleigh. Head of the Department of Architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Mr. Mies van der Rohe directed the famous Bauhaus in Berlin and Dessau before coming to this country in 1938.

## GALLERIES OPEN



**The Gallery of Contemporary Art**, an enterprising new venture which will open in Toronto, Canada, on September 14, will have as its first show an impressive collection of Tarascan sculpture (see Nayarit woman with bowl shown at left). Begun by two brothers, Barry and Morry Kernerman, the gallery plans to institute a policy of presenting two one-man shows at a time, featuring the work of a young Canadian together with the work of an already established artist, either Canadian or American. In the future it is planned to expand the gallery's program to include shows by contemporary Europeans.

In San Francisco, the **Triangle Art Gallery**, a co-operative venture undertaken by painters John Peterson, Richard Godfrey and Herb Wasserman, has just opened its doors at the corner of Broadway and Columbus Avenue. The three artists are conducting the new enterprise in addition to their other occupations, and the gallery therefore is open in the evening on weekdays and from 2:00 to 10:00 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

Edward Millman has been appointed Visiting Professor of Art at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute—an appointment made possible through a grant by an anonymous practicing architect. As visiting artist, Mr. Millman will teach graphics and basic design work to second-year architecture students and will also be available for informal consultation with other students. A Guggenheim Fellow in Creative Painting for the past two summers, Mr. Millman has previously been visiting artist or resident painter at several American universities. From 1939 to 1941, with Mitchell Siporin, he painted the murals in the St. Louis Post Office, the largest single commission awarded by the United States government.

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The American painter Jackson Pollock died in an automobile crash on August 11 in Easthampton, Long Island. Pollock was killed instantly when his car, traveling at high speed, went off the road and overturned. The accident also took the life of Miss Edith Metzger, and left a third rider, Miss Ruth Kligman, seriously injured.

**GALLERIES MOVE  
UPTOWN**

The continuing drift of New York galleries to uptown locations is particularly evident this year as art firms complete preparations for the coming season.

Three large houses—Grace Borgenicht, Grand Central Moderns and Kootz—have left their midtown addresses to set up new quarters in the Art Center Building at 1018 Madison Avenue. A fourth firm, the long-established Babcock Galleries, has left 57th Street for premises at 805 Madison Avenue.

Also in keeping with the trend is the removal of Plaza Art Galleries, the auction firm, to the new Antique and Art Center, 406 East 79th Street.

Headquarters of the National League of Women Painters, the Argent Gallery has moved to 236 East 60th Street. The Parma Gallery has taken new quarters at 1111 Lexington Avenue, and the Mi Chou Gallery at 36 West 56th Street.

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During the past year there have been an increasing number of attacks on creative freedom as well as against individuals in the art world. Last spring the United States Information Agency capitulated to the pressure of these attacks and canceled three art exhibitions sponsored by the American Federation of Arts and a tour planned for the Symphony of the Air. We have waited hopefully since then for our national leaders to defend artistic freedom. With the exception of a small minority, including Senators Humphrey and Fulbright, they have remained silent. We believe that the issues at stake are of vital importance to the whole art world as well as all freedom-loving people. We have, therefore, written the following open letter to the President, and we invite the comments and support of our readers and other public-spirited citizens.

## **AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, THE HONORABLE DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER**

Dear Mr. President:

Two years ago you sent a message to the Museum of Modern Art on the occasion of its twenty-fifth anniversary. Therein you stated that "freedom of the arts is a basic freedom, one of the pillars of liberty in our land." Prompted by your restatement of these principles we venture to call your attention to the following recent actions by an agency of the executive branch of our government. We are confident that you will find these acts to be the very antithesis to the principles announced by you.

For some time now the United States has sent various art exhibitions and entertainers abroad. Last spring we were shocked when the United States Information Agency canceled foreign tours for three important art exhibitions and the Symphony of the Air. The reason announced was that some artists or performers belonged or had belonged to left-wing organizations. As a matter of fact, none of the paintings or music contained anything of a political nature. Indeed, one exhibition was of paintings of various sporting scenes. Several of the artists were no longer alive—their work was to be exhibited posthumously.

The art exhibitions were organized by the American Federation of Arts, whose president is James S. Schramm, an outstanding businessman and a former member of the Republican National Committee. Its board is composed of important museum officials and civic leaders.

When the Symphony of the Air, the world-famous orchestra originally organized by Arturo Toscanini, toured Japan last year it was unanimously hailed everywhere and served most effectively to generate good will for our country. Similarly, the various art exhibitions which have been sent abroad have been received with enthusiasm as cultural ambassadors toward world peace in a free world. They have counteracted Soviet propaganda, which has tried to picture the United States as barbarian and materialistic.

Quite aside from the wrongs which these governmental actions have wrought both on creative artists and the public, such censorship exercised by a government agency violates American traditions and principles of freedom and serves to place democracy in a false light.

The free world is presently engaged in a crucial battle for the hearts and minds of men. Among America's greatest assets in this struggle are our cultural heritage and achievements. When these are silenced, we not only stifle creative art, we forfeit the respect of people in other lands.

We believe that you, Mr. President, are deeply interested in freedom of art and concerned that the world learn of our cultural as well as our industrial achievements. We hope, therefore, that you will intervene so that these acts of censorship will not obliterate the freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights.

Respectfully yours,

*Jonathan Marshall, Publisher*

*James N. Rosenberg, Chairman of the Board*

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**NEW ACQUISITIONS  
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Edgar Degas: DANCER PUTTING ON HER STOCKING, 1900-1910 (17 x 11 1/4 inches).

*Five modern masterworks  
in bronze enter the collection  
of the Minneapolis Institute  
of Arts*

CURRENTLY on display at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts are five bronze sculptures—three by Degas and one each by Renoir and Picasso—which have recently been added to the museum's permanent collection.

The works by Degas were among the seventy-odd pieces in wax or clay found in his studio at the time of his death. Later cast in metal, the three pieces acquired by the Institute represent the beginning, middle and end of his long career. *Girls Picking Apples*, a small relief plaque, dates from 1865-70 and is probably the first work in sculpture that he did; through the deceptive sketchiness of its highly impressionistic treatment it conveys the decisiveness of action that distinguishes his art. The spirited and highly articulated small study of the *Horse Galloping on Right Foot* was modeled sometime before 1880. The final study in the group, *Dancer Putting On Her Stocking*, reflects Degas's latter-day preoccupation with themes from the theater and ballet.

Renoir's *Judgment of Paris* is a principal work from the last period of his life when, through the urging of his dealer, Ambroise Vollard, and despite the almost complete paralysis of his arms and hands, the artist turned to modeling. In this bronze relief Paris, on his knee, offers the Apple of Discord to Aphrodite as the fairest of the goddesses; Hera and Athena show their anger, and Hermes rushes forward from the background. Both in pose and configuration the goddesses are one of the most striking realizations of Renoir's womanly type—robust, youthful, unaffected.

Picasso's *Monkey and Her Baby*, dating from 1952, incorporates a toy automobile for the head, an automobile spring for the tail and a machined iron sphere for the body, all held together in clay. The juxtaposition of unrelated materials and objects follows a principle which Picasso applied in sculpture as early as 1912, during his early cubist period. In effect, the piece represents the counterpart in sculpture of "collage" in painting.

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Etienne Hajdu: FEMME ASSISE (1955). Galerie Jeanne Bucher.

## PARIS

*Two broad showings summarize recent developments in the French art world.*

BY BARBARA BUTLER

**B**ESIDES the gallery exhibitions of established artists held during the summer months, and the special historical and commemorative exhibitions at the museums, two recent events gave one a particularly close view of contemporary French art and the Parisian art world: the Salon de la Jeune Sculpture at the Parc Bagatelle and the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles.

The Salon de la Jeune Sculpture is an annual exhibition of recent work, primarily by younger artists, as the name implies; on the whole, it proved to be more interesting in conception than in result. More than one hundred pieces were set in the middle of the Parc Bagatelle, which is at the very end of the Bois de Boulogne, among the trees and shrubbery, along the lawns and in special glades in a space of the more than two acres—more than ample room for a truly outdoor sculpture exhibition. Although there were some good pieces—the most notable one being Gilioli's seven-foot triangular-shaped plaster sculpture—most of the works consisted of nymphs, nudes, mothers-holding-babies and religious figures embodying clichés in sculptural technique as well as subject. The *succès de scandale* of the exhibition was an enormous Dubuffet-like Christ figure, by James Brown, in a heavy, gauze-like material, fifteen feet in height, with claw-like hands, dripped with red paint, extending more than twenty feet across. In a dispute which raged for days—during which the piece was removed and

then put back up again—it was the public and the park versus the artists. The final upshot after this first round was won for art was that the “park-lovers” who were furious with the entire exhibition would next year be undisturbed by the intrusion of sculpture.

The Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, which this year had been reorganized as a more liberal exhibition—principally through the efforts of the president of the 1956 committee, Robert Fontené, the *Cimaise* critic Gindertael and the painter Villamy—gave a fair picture of both painting and sculpture in Paris today. Although the exhibition is no longer exclusively “abstract-geometricist,” this school, which numbers a large percentage of French artists, is still very much in evidence here. One very long, curving gallery—almost one-third of the exhibition space—is hung with mat-surfaced, brilliantly hued canvases of geometric or near-geometric forms dividing a strictly held picture plane. This post-de Stijl school departs from the Dutch painters in a looser interpretation of Mondrian's ninety-degree angle, the forty-five-degree angle of Van Doesburg's elementarism, by an inclusion of less strictly geometric forms and in a greater freedom of palette, which shows the influence of the high-keyed color juxtapositions of pre-1920 Kandinsky, and also of Léger, Kupka and the Delaunays, as well as Herbin, the leader of the French abstract-geometricists and the founder of this salon.

The obvious influences of "foreign" artists on this school, which completely dominated French painting until five years ago as the post-Mondrian New York school dominated American art up to 1946, gives a very explicit idea of the gulf between the official and the actual art world of Paris. As Michel Seuphor reported in these pages two years ago, Jean Cassou (and the names of Cassou, who is Conservateur en Chef du Musée National, and Bernard Dorival, who is Conservateur du Musée National d'Art Moderne, almost entirely describe the official art world in Paris) said he would never give a Mondrian retrospective since he didn't like Mondrian. To this day there is not one Mondrian, nor a single Kandinsky or Klee, in the Musée d'Art Moderne (and the sole representative of twentieth-century American art is a Grandma Moses).

Among other loose classifications of the paintings here—and as the exhibition has been installed in the manner of the Whitney Museum group exhibitions the hanging committee has assisted the critics in this pursuit—are the large number of canvases painted in the manner of Nicolas de Staël. De Staël's familiar round-edged, rectangular forms can be found in every imaginable dimension, color and texture—almost never, however, departing far enough from the master's own paintings to create a unique statement. De Staël's paintings, which, for all their virtues, were never notable for their range, and which now of course unfortunately stand as a completed *oeuvre*, have had an even more devastating influence on Parisian art than Willem de Kooning's work has had on the New York school. I have heard painters say that De Staël haunted their studios, and the local joke here for the last year has been that since the de-Stalinization policy in Russia the next improvement looked forward to is the de-De Staëlization of Paris.

Another influence that can be noted here—and one with rather happier results—is that of Hans Hartung, one of the leaders of French post-war painting, whose work however as demonstrated by his long blue-ground painting with its stick-like forms exhibited here seems to have lost much of its former vigor. And the racing line with which he created his unique image, which is so often misunderstood by his French followers as merely a new method of dividing the picture plane, has slowed into being only a form—as in the work of these followers.

Jackson Pollock, too, is not without disciples here. There is one whole room of "drips" mostly reminiscent of his '48-'52 canvases (1952 being the year of the famous Pollock exhibition here which was organized by Michel Tapié). As a whole the exhibition looks a good deal more like this year's Abstract American Artists' exhibition than it does like the Stable Show, not only because of the large number of abstract-geometric works but, what is more important, because of its general level of quality. Almost all the paintings here are knowledgeable, serious, professional works. If the Stable Show this year had more top-caliber paintings and sculpture, it also certainly had many worse ones; if art here rarely rises above second-class—it also rarely descends to fourth- or fifth-rate.

Also unlike the Stable Show, many of the painting factions are not represented, although the Réalités Nouvelles committee, which decided to have an invitation exhibition, invited almost every contemporary Parisian artist of merit to exhibit. They were refused for various reasons: as is inevitable, certain artists did not have available work; Arpad Szenes and his wife Maria Vieira da Silva exhibit at the Salon des Surindépendants, which does not allow its members to appear in any other similar group show; with the exception of Hosiasson and Damian, none of the artists of the Stadler or Rive Droite Galleries (where Michel Tapié is artistic advisor) accepted the invitation to show, undoubtedly because of Tapié's lukewarm if not cool attitude towards this (as well as any other) salon. The committee of the Salon de Mai—which pretty much coincides with the Galerie de France artists (Pignon, Manessier, Singier, etc.)—refused to exhibit. And none of the Galerie

Maeght group, which includes Bazaine, Ubac and Palazuelo, exhibited here because M. Clayeux, the director of the gallery, does not allow "his" painters to show in group exhibitions—a type of movie-starism hardly unknown in the United States.

The sculpture in the exhibition, which bears about the same ratio to the paintings as sculpture did to painting in this year's Stable Show, has been relegated to a separate room. Among the missing here are Etienne Martin and Etienne Hajdu, whose current one-man exhibition is a highlight of the season. Very little activity among the lesser-known sculptors is to be seen here, and the best works are those of Gilioli and Domela, and/or Arp, Pevsner and Hamm—who with the painters Nicholson, Bissière, Sonia Delaunay, Kupka, Magnelli are Invités d'Honneur.

The most interesting paintings to this reviewer are the tall, rosy tachist canvas of Marcelle Loubchansky (to my knowledge the only painter in the group around the critic Charles Estienne who is showing in this salon) and the paintings of Richard Mortensen and Victor Vasarely. The latter two are abstract-geometricists whose work is well known in America through reproductions in *Aujourd'hui*, Andre Bloc's publication, which unfortunately do not give an adequate idea of their work, since this kind of painting is probably least well represented by photographs. Antonio Lago shows here one of his best paintings, cascades of spots of varying pinkish-gray tones. And Hosiasson, a Russian-born Parisian artist, is represented here by a small heavily painted canvas of myriad surface patterns in a singularly subtle gray-green key. His undulating forms grow up and down his canvases somewhat in the manner of Clifford Still, except that here every grain of paint has been worked by the artist's brush, giving the surface a sculptural quality. Hosiasson will probably be exhibited next season in New York; Sam Kootz has taken home twelve of his canvases, and Alfred Barr has just purchased one of his large important paintings, *Rouge et noir*.

Another outstanding artist here is the American painter Oscar Chelmsky, whose painting also has the quality of a very, very low relief. In the present canvas, however, rather than composing in "waves of paint," the artist is involved with the tension of forms which operate as on a magnetic field, completely divorced from the ordinary sense of up and down. These are forms that do not merely serve as divisions of the canvas; they create their own space.

The other Americans exhibiting here—José Guerrero, John Koenig, Lewin Alcopely, Bernard Childs and Joe Downing (all at present living in Paris)—also show up very well at the eleventh Salon des Réalités Nouvelles.

**Philippe Hosiasson:** LA TACHE ROUGE (1956). Galerie Stadler.



## SPECIAL AMERICAN NUMBER

*Our art is now equal to any on the world scene, says this young American sculptor—  
but the social conditions in which it is made to function  
still cast a doubt on its promise for the future.*

### THE PROSPECTS FOR AMERICAN ART

BY RICHARD STANKIEWICZ

IN THE day-to-day life which is filled with the preoccupations of my sculpture, other art activities, making a living and the rest of what makes up my days, it is not often that "The Prospects for American Art" comes to mind as an idea to track very far. I wouldn't quite say that it doesn't matter to me at all, but it does appear that the future is, for an artist, a pretty academic consideration. For an investor or a caterer to markets, of course, it is important to know just what is around the corner so as to behave in anticipation of conditions. But good art is always good, and I believe that in working sincerely in the way that is most natural to him and trying to achieve an expression and form that are good anywhere and anytime, an artist fulfills his own time and those before and after. The work we are doing now comes out of the past and is the future as a child: all of our predicting and theorizing won't have a fraction of the effect that work has. Still, it might do no harm to look up from our work and practice a little prospecting in time.

CONCERNING our art in itself—as art—I have the least fear. Since perhaps fifty years ago, certainly since the thirties, we have had a nucleus of hard-shelled artists who have labored hard to break down the Philistine walls, and we who come along today with our effort owe a great debt to them. They wouldn't have to do with what was popular at the time, what might have earned them some comfort. There was little, almost no public sympathy for European ideas imported and developed here or for any native manifestations of modern art of the time. Eventually they won a certain position, or toleration, if only by persistence; and the young artists today inherit not only a pioneered territory but an example of tenacity and confidence in self in the face of indifference or discouragement. With this tradition of the difficult as normal, the near future has my confidence and faith. There won't be universal softness, anyway. Along with all the bad artists, followers and posers, we shall for a long time have a few who have the driving art impulse which is more important to them as a motive than any of the side issues, including success, comfort, approval.

NO, the less confident forecasting is in the matter of art's relationship to the public, the support of the arts and the peculiar rigidity of our government towards the arts. I suppose the latter two considerations grow

out of the first one: the state of these things is pretty dim now, and their future is not very sure. When I think of the relationship between art and the public, I am sure to end up with education and conditioning at the bottom of it all. Maybe it is necessary to say to some people that no art is very popular in this country—contemporary painting, sculpture, music, dance and literature are all included. I would say that even the movies are not popular—as art: how many people could name even one intelligent criterion of good cinema? The reflex is to say that this is anti-intellectualism, the result of mass inculcation and all the rest of it. (There's a regular trade in examining low-browism—I know I am tromping on professional intellectual ground.) Still, it isn't that many people are born without the necessary sensibilities. We all have them, and it is a matter of developing them and a matter of attitude. The attitude comes first, I think, as the director of our education. I don't think that any but the rarest elementary schools have ever done much to direct children into awareness of art-value, the middle schools ignore art again for practical courses to prepare young people for "life and citizenship" and the higher schools leave the arts to the option of students who are by that time pretty well molded. The personally visible result is that often (non-artist) people I have been getting along with amiably come up with the most offensive or ridiculous attitudes when they discover that I am a sculptor. Of course, this is a thing to get used to, but like a chronic pain it has its acute moments. I wouldn't go along with the complaints that our artists are out of touch with what people want, that if they insist on flying off to "extremes," they have only themselves to blame for non-approval. These complaints are not well based because, contrary to the popular notion, I think most artists know exactly what people want, but can't permit themselves to supply it for the simple reason that what people want is bad art. Artists have, I believe, a legitimate expectation that when they pursue their explorations and exert themselves to the limit of their powers and of their understanding, that people notice this. It's not just an egotistic claim for attention. If we respond at all to art, if our responses are genuine and not pretended, then we must be interested in new developments and inventions. So I would say that when people who claim an interest in any of the arts snub a new development offhand, they are not interested in the arts from native sensibility but from some other, pretentious level—trained responses, literal-mindedness or whatever. I



would mourn the fact that art has inherited this position of being beyond the born nature of most of us; really astonishing numbers of people still have this idea; and believing in it makes it seem to have an irreversible kind of truth. I begin to see that what I mean by popularity is not faddism but interested participation by many people. And popularity as flattering attention is something that most artists have gone without for a long time and worked independently of. The importance of a real (not feigned) public interest, that I am thinking of now, is in the automatic, tangible benefit it would bring to our artists, who would then be freed to give all their working attention to the practice of their arts rather than the energies they have left over from the same exertions to make a living that everyone else makes.

I feel it a duty to tell the many people who don't know it that many of our best artists cannot subsist from their art. They are sometimes the best-known artists, shown in museums, mentioned best in the reviews, reported most often in the art books. And all the trades and occupations working with art make money on it—the artist seldom does. The grinding tragedy of it is that today we are able for the first time to stand up to the art of any country in the world, unashamed of what we have done. Equals, at least. And the people who make this true spend their days in factories. To all the pious folk who pretend adoration of the arts, cultured awareness and sensitivity, I say think about this. *Think.*

**P**OSSIBLY one of the results of our general stunted receptivity and lack of information and interest is the occasional unseemly outbursts that appear in the press. Thus Huntington Hartford would seem to be the classic know-nothing in art. One could even wish for a competent psychoanalytic run-down on that advertisement he put out about a year ago. (Oh, the money of it!) Although seemingly totally ignorant of the meaning of anything in art, not to mention verifiable museum and gallery statistics, or any facts, or sense concerning any politics in art, he swung a long scythe. To tell the truth, as I read his essay I kept thinking that the poor man is at least a little confused. Related to this example is another, more recent, but not much less frenetic article in the proudly liberal magazine, *The Reporter*, by Marya Mannes ("Double Talk in Art: Examination of Extremes," June 14), who takes up her stick in the same sick spirit and vacancy of intellect. People of this sort seem to have no notion of what they themselves like in art except that it must not be this and it must not be that. Perhaps they would be most comfortable if it just weren't. I really don't think these people are very important except as representatives of an extreme variant of a general condition . . . if you want to think about it.

**T**HIS last somehow leads to thoughts about the peculiar behavior of our government when it finds itself working with art. The obvious indictments would be against the most evident foolishness, like the State Department's recent cancellation of an exhibition of American art to tour Europe. It seems that some of our Guardians in Texas objected to some of the artists' politics, and so the show was called off. The matter has been much belabored, but it makes a good example of the stupidities that stand in the way of any hope for forthcoming support for art from the government. And,

too, we have the unlovely spectacle of idiotic presidential pronouncements about art.

However, these sporadic performances really don't interest me as much as the government's more usual business in the arts. Consider, either as an opportunity for proud national display or simply for art's sake, the meaning to both our country and to our art, of the design of our coins, stamps, engraved documents and monies, medallions, insignia and all the many uses of art for the public. Can we be very proud of a National Art Commission that doesn't seem to realize that Ingres is dead? I have not yet mentioned our execrable monuments—it is to our eternal shame that the giant soap-sculptures which cost such immense fortunes are being put up to signify our proudest ideals, to mark the grimest work our soldiers have ever done. It ought to sicken every citizen that the bloody mud of the battlefields, the obscene glory of a moment and the motives assigned to all that, are represented by the vacuity, the vulgarity and sissiness of what they are now calling monuments. I don't know how much to hope for from the few small voices in Congress which are trying to do something about the strangle hold that the National Sculpture Society (which I am told is richly endowed and maintains a lobby) has on our government purse and the commissions that represent us to the world. It is a practically criminal disgrace, and the least any of us can do is to write to our congressmen about it. It must end. It is intolerable.

**I**F THE non-artist readers of this are beginning to believe that this is a very one-sided piece, it might make them comfortable to know that I think our future would be a little more promising if our artists themselves recognized the uses of the sister arts. When the theatrical arts can loosen up the craft guild of scene designers and painters, we might have a better stage. If our architects would come off the smug position that they are the keepers of all knowledge of plastic space, they and the painters and sculptors might all benefit. When the book publishers (do the writers have any influence?) give over their illustration tasks to fine artists instead of the hacks and pick-up bargain artists, our poetry and creative writing might profit from it. In fact, the arts should use each other, just as all the world should use them.

**F**OR all these conditions, the prospect of American art in its general position in the world seems doubtful to me. I am not optimistic enough to prevent poor prognostications, although the imaginary future can be so thrilling. At this minute parts of our large cities are being demolished for "improvements." Sadly, I can guess how much of an improvement we shall see. But the possibilities of composed public spaces, integrated buildings, artful structures, free-standing sculpture and fountains, murals incorporated in their architecture, and every part of the whole doing something for every other part and the total still thrill me—as a dream, alas.

In the end the indignation over the way of things in this country yields to a quieter sadness and the lonely feeling that very few people care. I suppose it is the structure of our education, economy and politics that the power to bring the glories to life must always be in the hands of the types which care least. I don't like it; but it would seem so. I would like to be unconvinced.

#### AMERICAN RECONSIDERATIONS: I.

*With this issue ARTS inaugurates a new series of articles devoted to the significant American painters of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The series, which will appear intermittently during the coming season, begins with the reconsideration of Thomas Eakins by Leslie Katz.*

## THOMAS EAKINS NOW



*The Pair Oared Shell, 1872.*

*Time continues to enhance and confirm  
the particular qualities of his greatness.*

BY LESLIE KATZ

ONE can bring to a major painting by Thomas Eakins the quality of attention and expectation one brings to a work by Giorgione, Vermeer, Watteau, or even Seurat: he is that deep and that rewarding, a painter-poet whose conceptions inspired his technique to an ecstasy of precision, a master of proportioned mystery and impassioned clarification.

One must look hard, penetratingly, at a painting by Eakins, however, because the depth of his charm, as is often the case with pioneer greatness, is not always obvious. Through the darkness that only appears to be gloom glow indelible images of people and objects. He communicates a sense of inalienable presence and integrity in both persons and things.

His well-known devotion to the anatomical structure and mathematical dimensions of his subject matter was not only for the purpose of expressing literal likeness; his paintings convey the esthetic and emotional reality of his subjects. A prodigious technique was needed to sustain the burden of his originality and insight. One can speak easily of his "honesty," the sobriety and fidelity of his rendering of the composed scenes he chose to paint, but something else of importance emerges through the solidity.

There is in the paintings of Thomas Eakins an air of intoxication, an exaltation, an ineffable but robust glamour, the glamour of *character*, temporal but not delusive. His paintings communicate an electric yet abiding excitement, a sense

of durable *élan*, and a consciousness of individuality of person and uniqueness of moment in time that is perhaps peculiarly American. An exact awareness suffuses his canvases, as if they were painted with a heightened perception which F. Scott Fitzgerald, in another context, described as the state of mind when "things go glimmering."

The emotion generated is a kind of personal absorption, and looking at a number of his paintings one realizes that the emotion arises from and is native to conditions that are frankly situational, like being in love with an activity or a person. The principal people in his paintings are powerfully active, occupied or preoccupied with doing things they like to do, practicing a profession or an avocation, or in the case of portraits, engaged in an activity of thought or reverie, at rest temporarily, contemplating action.

Look at, say, one of the early scenes of rowers in racing sculls on the Schuylkill River. *The Pair Oared Shell* (1872) for example, at the Philadelphia Museum, shows the Biglen brothers, professional racers, rowing past a giant stone bridge pier at twilight. The sun has descended, it seems; we are at the last moment before dark, that time when (as at dawn, or just before rain) things seen appear especially vivid and revealed in the half-light, and the diffuse illumination lends an objective poignancy to each object.

The composition and color unite to strengthen the effect of subtle visual strength. The massiveness and texture of the stone bridge pier, the distant and undecipherable shore, the precise and rippled liquidity of the water surface—all interact to emphasize the companionate isolation of the brothers, poised between strokes in the act of rowing. Small, delicate, able beings, they stare across at us, the bright blueness of the kerchief-bound heads and the whiteness of their skin dramatic in the gathering darkness, while the light remaining sends a highlight of white as sharp as a knife edge down the length of an oar, and catches their muscular forearms, a forehead, a knee, and their eyes.

An ecstasy pervades the scene, the kind of intoxicated clarity one sees in paintings by Vermeer. The "real thing," this glamour, this virility, this personality of time and place, can immediately be distinguished from the spurious aura of "magic realism." In the work of an artist of the stature of Eakins, no effect is an impersonal convention of style or trick. Such a painter takes no short cut; he allows himself to get away with nothing. One feels a mind at work throughout the design, and the basis of the design is an acute observation of the facts of sight, used to render an emotional conviction.

Because of the nature of his concern, the painting is a consummation, and has the substance of a poem or story, the impress of a dramatic reckoning, an impact almost Sophoclean.

The effect is of a *confrontation*, a moment of realization brought about by facing facts, a spiritual significance revealed through physical action, the spiritual expressed *through* the physical.

THOMAS EAKINS dedicated his outward concern to controllable means: technique. With Georges Seurat, he might have said, "... I apply my method and that is all there is to it," for like Seurat, he developed a method of painting based on scientific principles. Whereas Seurat may be said to have been primarily interested in facts of appearance, Eakins was interested in facts of substance. He carefully made mathematical measurements and perspective studies of his subject matter, often employing trigonometric tables and scale models. Throughout his life he was a student of anatomy and developed an expert knowledge of muscular structure and function. To learn more about the process of movement he used photography and designed one of the earliest practical "motion picture" cameras, building parts of it himself. With this camera he made a series of motion studies of human figures in multiple images which are possibly the first ever taken of the human body in action. His research was never designed to provide stereotypes of method for art, however, but rather resembled the studies Gustave Flaubert made in order to write *Madame Bovary*; it was undertaken for the purpose of achieving authenticity in his painting. He sought to achieve esthetic verisimilitude with the conscientiousness of genius.

The artistic nature of his research is apparent in the sculptured reliefs and models of horses he made as studies for the animals that draw the carriage in the painting *The Fairman Rogers Four in Hand* (1879), at the Philadelphia Museum. Of one horse, named Josephine, he made a large relief *écorché*, showing muscular anatomy beneath the skin. A second relief is identical except that the skin is on and the horse appears to be alive—Josephine, a certain horse, veins throbbing, forelock askew. He also made four small sketch sculptures of horses trotting, alive not only with directed motion, but with general horse energy, hoofs jaunty in action, bodies sidling with restless grace, heads tossing, ears pricked, nostrils snorting. In the final painting they are creatures of controlled exuberance, pulling a grand contrivance, a high-roofed carriage with red wheels, loaded with formally dressed people, their quiet, human faces seen under the shadows of top hats, bonnets and a red parasol. For this painting he made models not of the people, who sit motionless, but of the horses, which move. He was interested in the understructure of *nakedness* that shapes appearance.

THE opportunities for studying and depicting the nude human body in a natural setting were highly limited in

Below: *Marguerite in Skating Costume*, c. 1871; at right, *Harry Lewis*, c. 1876; far right, *The Young Man*, c. 1902. All paintings, unless otherwise noted, are from the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.







William Rush Carving His Allegory of the Schuylkill River, 1877.

#### THOMAS EAKINS NOW *continued*

Philadelphia and all America during Eakins' lifetime, to say the least. Nevertheless, early in his career, he managed to paint an unmistakably American girl in a state of complete and real nakedness, such as never before had been painted in the United States.

As if to emphasize that his painting, far from being an act of rebellion or extremism or a gesture of affront to convention, was an affirmation of honor, modesty and naturalness, he showed the girl in a historical context, and viewed from the back, posed as the model in the painting *William Rush Carving His Allegory of the Schuylkill River*. In 1809, over a half-century before, the Philadelphia sculptor Rush and the local society beauty who was the model for the allegorical statue had become unwillingly embroiled in scandal because she posed nude. Eakins chose the subject as a poet or dramatist might.

In his first painting of Rush and the model (1877), the unalterable and chaste *fact* of nakedness is the primary subject. The model is the heroine of the painting. Not only her nudity, but the unaffected boldness of her appearing thus before a man is depicted. Her pose, with a chaperon sitting nearby knitting, has the air of an initial or pioneer event. Her body is shown beautiful, infused by an unravished sensuousness, her flesh all white and gold in the dark, cluttered, barn-like studio. Her stance, with a heavy book on her right shoulder, has the boyish freedom and independence of movement of the

American girl. She is strong, even hearty, nothing pale or loath, modest but unashamed. The quality of her nakedness is emphasized by a prominent still life in the foreground composed of her elaborate underclothing, petticoat, lacy dress and bonnet draped in disarray over a chair.

The sculptor is shown at work. The allegorical statue, almost finished, is clothed, but as Eakins knew, Rush needed a nude model in order to portray the reality of the body under the dress. The chaperon, absorbed in her knitting as the sculptor is in his occupation, strikes a formal note beyond irony; she is no less natural dressed than the model is undressed.

The painting demonstrates a state of mind, or action, that follows a desire or enters an experience with a determined innocence of spirit, affronting hypocrisy on all levels. It is a conscious allegory on the life of Eakins, who identified himself with Rush and knew what opposition to expect. The sincerity of his interest in the nude was crucial to his career both as a painter and teacher. In the pursuance of his aims he became a controversial figure and lost his influential position as a teacher, but far from embracing this role of storm center or allowing himself to be martyred, he went on affirming his purpose. Thirty years after painting the first version, he painted another of Rush with the model and chaperon, making the chaperon an old Negro slave woman. Also, in the same year (1908), he painted the nude model alone, from the front, step-

ping down from her posing platform, gallantly and respectfully helped by Rush, who holds her hand. The figure of Rush in this painting is seen from the back and looks like a self-portrait of Thomas Eakins. The subject was central to his thought, but as in Velasquez's *The Maids of Honor* and Vermeer's *The Painter's Art*, the allegory is based on an intimate actuality and is an element inspiring the power of the painting.

In preparation for the first painting, Eakins visited the site of Rush's old studio, consulted people who had seen it, studied Rush's sketchbook, and made wax models of his principal works, including a self-portrait of the sculptor.

**A**LTHOUGH he painted a few scenes showing naked humans in Arcadian settings, the overtly transcendental did not appeal to Eakins. He was stirred by the actual. The living female form, nude or semi-nude, could not be publicly seen in Philadelphia; but the sight of a semi-nude male in action was unself-consciously enjoyed by the citizenry at many athletic events, such as swimming, rowing and boxing. A good athlete himself, Eakins considered the male physique to be as interesting as the female.

The most ambitious of his boxing scenes (he painted three in all) is the large *Between Rounds* (1899), which shows the boxer Billy Smith resting in his corner, making the most of the between-round pause. In the foreground below the ring the timer sits watching the clock, while in the background in the balconies we see the motley faces of the waiting male audience, its attention dispersed during the interval. Every face is personal.

The painting shows a contemplative moment in a scene of intense action. The body of the boxer, which is the center of interest (we do not see his opponent), has the character of something created primarily by action, but we see this body engaged in an effort to be still and to derive sustenance or nourishment from the act of stillness. The expression on the face of the boxer is thoughtful and remote, spiritual and determined. His second, fanning him with a towel, and his manager, studying and advising him, have the sympathy, dignity and toughness of hospital nurses. The nude body of the boxer is like a white-hot coal, a thing of marvelously hard beauty and practical purity, a breathing incandescence. This is "the body electric" Whitman wrote of; in the work of Thomas Eakins the body is the soul.

Making an "ordinary" scene classical, painting the eloquence of an everyday event, he was consciously operating on a level with Renaissance artists and sculptors of the age of Pericles, reflecting the divine in human form. What is more, he was doing so in a direct line that connected the age of enlightenment of the American Revolution with the renaissance of American art that took place in the first quarter of the twentieth century, aware of European culture, but remaining essentially native in subject matter and feeling. In literature, this movement culminated in the writings of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ring Lardner and Ernest Hemingway (after Stephen Crane, Edith Wharton), and later, Theodore Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson; in painting, in the work of *The Eight*, particularly Robert Henri and John Sloan.

Both the literature and the art, respecting their subject



*Between Rounds*, 1899.

matter, employed a vivid directness and economy of expression sometimes mistakenly called "understatement," and a technique that places the implicit and integral character of the subject above (or deeper than) any explicit and overt comment on, interpretation of, or reaction to it.

**T**HE puritanism of his native environment could deny Eakins opportunity and encouragement to paint the naked body, but it could not deny him what may be called the nakedness of the human face. Portraiture became the main occupation of his later years. He was able to communicate, through the mute expressiveness of the people he painted, the awkward, unquenchable originality of person that marked the American character of his sitters.

In not one of his many and marvelous portraits is there a gesture of *generalization*; he is wildly in love with the drama of the specific individual. The character of his subject is probed, appreciated, faced up to, brought into a strong, exquisite focus with merciless tenderness.

Consider, for example, *A Lady with a Setter Dog* (1885), at the Metropolitan Museum. The inclined neck holds the head alert, graceful in its naïveté. Her countenance is almost bruised with controlled emotion. Just as an old boxer's face is shaped by blows, her face by all its experience is formed—the

At right: Two of the preparatory sculptures which Eakins used for the painting shown on the opposite page.





**Portrait of a Lady with a Setter Dog** (Mrs. Eakins), 1885;  
collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

#### THOMAS EAKINS NOW *continued*

deep-set blue eyes, the firm, full, sensitive mouth, the broad nose, the red ear and upturned hair, shaping the small, stalwart, endearing head. Her hand, lying half open, palm up, on a Japanese book, is power recumbent, none the less potent for its fragility. One notes that the radiant blue silk of her dress is outshone by the white of her neck, and the sharpness of her presence is modified by the soft, blurred foreground of the rug and the big, wakeful dog outstretched beside her tiny, slippered foot. And the chair might have appeared in a still life, highly appreciated for its own sake; here it participates in a larger world: it is being sat upon, and nothing more important can happen to a chair; yet it is highly finished and present in its own right. Eakins never finishes a detail or fills a background just to be consistent; the finishing contributes to his chief concern, which Cecelia Beaux aptly called "the inhabited body."

The portrait commissions he received were few in number,

and he often seems to have chosen as a model a friend or an acquaintance whose face and pose expressed absorption or reserve. Many wear an air of acceptance without resignation, an active patience, as if maintaining sensitivity of soul and sanctity of person without receiving outward recognition or approbation. Some appear inspirited by an acute loneliness, as if bearing thwarted but unrelinquished hopes of a private nature. Looking at almost any of his major portraits, especially those of women, can engender a sentiment similar to that expressed by George Eliot in the last sentence of *Middlemarch*, when after the accumulated momentum of a thousand pages she writes: "... the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs."

The people Eakins chose to paint are the salt of the earth.



They are "artists" of daily existence who practice and are committed to the forms of life available to them. Theirs are faces you still see today. No camera can interpret them. Like Eakins himself, these men and women—students, doctors, scientists, inventors, musicians, teachers, athletes, craftsmen—were perhaps the saints of American life, secular, but none the less dedicated for that, and their hearts were not so simple. He liked best to show them in action, but his sporting figures are no more *active* than his portraits of thinkers, musicians or surgeons. They are merely engaged in another kind of activity. After all, he most often chose to show the moment of rest amid action—the oarsman between strokes, the hunter about to take aim, the boxer between rounds, the operating surgeon pausing. What he presents may be described as *the contemplation of the action by the actor*.

In his large, early masterpiece, *The Gross Clinic* (1875), the central figure, Dr. Gross, is shown scalpel in hand, pausing thoughtfully in the midst of an operation, with an arena of medical students looking on. The Gross painting has a formal composition that hides the passion of its execution, but when it was first shown, the blood on the hands of the surgeon created a furor of public discussion and disapproval. The importance of the blood to the conception (the catharsis of surgery) can be seen in an extraordinary oil sketch of the composition at the Philadelphia Museum.

Eakins' preliminary sketches were most frequently in oil. He believed and taught that one should "draw with color." "The brush is a more powerful and rapid tool than the point or stump," he said. Here, in brush strokes that have the impact of organized lightning flashes, the figure of Dr. Gross emerges, a brooding, towering and aloof god of surgery. A cluster of jagged whites is the body of the patient, around which are gathered in an orbit of consuming interest the four heads of the assisting surgeons. The sketch is organized about two consummative points—two small spots of red, furnace bright, like lanterns amid the stormy holocaust of browns—one on the surgeon's hand, the other on the patient.

In the finished painting, Dr. Gross (and Dr. Agnew, in the second and even larger painting of a medical clinic, painted fifteen years later) is a heroic figure who represents all kinds of action, the thinker, doer and teacher in one—in short, an *artist*, who by definition in earlier days was what used to be called a "whole" man.

**A**ND that is what Thomas Eakins himself was, a *manly* person, an accomplished teacher and scientist, a civic being.

His life was as original as his art. In 1866, at the age of twenty-two, he went abroad and studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris for four solid years (he spoke and wrote French fluently the remainder of his life), and after a visit to Spain, where he saw the art of Velasquez and Ribera, he returned to Philadelphia and lived the rest of his life there, in the house where he was born, using his European-trained awareness for a native purpose. He was married to Susan Macdowell, herself a painter. His father, an engraver with a modest income, supported him all his life, and this support, financial and moral, made his career possible, since he sold few paintings, and even had trouble giving them away.

The culture he served rejected him, greeting his masterpieces first with abuse, and later (what is worse) with neglect; but his spirit did not weaken nor his courage fail. A giant of civility, he wasn't maladjusted to society; society was maladjusted to him. His nonconformism was never a pose or gesture, but integrity from which he would not retreat. His contribution deserves to be ranked with that of Whitman, Thoreau and Melville.

Though his stature is recognized today, with that of Winslow Homer and Albert Pinkham Ryder, he is seldom written about. Fortunately, the one book on Thomas Eakins, by Lloyd Goodrich, published in 1933, is a magnificently thorough biography and appreciation. (The volume, however, is almost out of print.) The Metropolitan Museum is about to place its collection of Eakins' work on permanent display. At the Philadelphia Museum, the largest collection of Eakins in the country has been on display all summer (and should it not be permanently on view?).

Since his death, in 1916, his reputation has been growing slowly, steadily. Perhaps his full significance is just beginning to be felt. As Flaubert said of Rabelais, "his work is a historical achievement, in itself so important that it belongs to and illumines the thought of each age." Walt Whitman, whose portrait Eakins painted, recognized this importance when he said, "Eakins is not a painter, he is a force."

But then one wonders if the present cultural mood of America, with its large enthusiasm for synthetic emotions and merchandised pieties, glorifying distractions and avoiding issues, may be any more auspicious for Eakins than was his own time. He may still be too thoroughgoing, too radical, too genuine. Yet, though *A Lady with a Setter Dog* may never replace *Whistler's Mother* as a popular image, the nation that produced him may one day catch up with him. In art, his kind of originality could make the United States worthy of its heritage.

Below: *The Oboe Player*; at right, *Mrs. Frank Hamilton Cushing*, c. 1894-5; far right, *Benjamin Eakins*, c. 1899.





## ARCHITECTURAL FRONTIERS

BY ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

The following article is based on a series of monographs on historical American buildings of special structural or design significance, prepared by Mrs. Huxtable for *Progressive Architecture* magazine. Called "Progressive Architecture in America," the feature begins concurrently with this ARTS presentation.

THE nineteenth century in America has been popularly accepted as a period of chaotic growth, crass commercialism and artistic anarchy. In architecture, it has been characterized as an age of romantic, archeological revivals, with a curiously rigid separation between the functional and the decorative, and ultimately, between art and life. Only recently has the elaborate nonsense of superficial Victorian culture been stripped away to reveal one of the most stimulating and significant chapters in architectural history. Beneath the façades of the gothic villa and the neo-Renaissance palace is the story of a revolution in structure and style.

American building in the important decades from 1850 to 1900 ranged from startlingly good to shockingly bad. The standards of Victorian taste, the sham of Victorian living, the fallacies of Victorian philosophy were all reflected in the architecture of the day. At its worst, American architecture was a superficial and depressing mélange of awkwardly proportioned borrowings from other periods and places, executed in massive masonry and liver-colored marbles. At its best, it offered bold, experimental, prophetic solutions using new materials, structure and techniques.

Significantly, this was the Iron Age in America. By 1858, Henry Van Brunt, addressing the American Institute of Architects, observed, "... no other material is so omnipresent in all the arts of utility..." Radical uses of the new metal were responsible for most of the century's structural advances, and the new building was essentially an iron architecture. The course of development, however, was far from clear. The vicissitudes of the struggle of the new architecture for appropriate visual expression are responsible for much of the sense of esthetic confusion commonly associated with the period. The combination of the mannerisms of a derivative, arty gentility with the striking forms of technical progress led to some alarming incongruities in design. On the one hand was naïve delight in the marvels of the new material; on the other, a desire for decorative camouflage. Nothing, however, could disguise the Iron Age; its wonders were everywhere. The era that began with Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace was already in full flower. It was only a step from London's huge glass and iron exhibition hall of 1851 to the building of similar structures for a vast variety of utilitarian and commercial purposes. The English railway stations had already shown the way with their trend-setting, arched iron sheds of the 1840's. The development of the metal frame, first in iron, later in steel, made possible for the first time the enclosure of great spaces and the bridging of large spans. It led to those vast exposition halls, markets, arcades, bridges, train sheds and department stores that soon appeared in both Europe and America and that were the characteristic buildings of the age.

For this was not only the Iron Age, it was the Commercial Age as well. Much of the extraordinary vitality of late nine-

teenth-century American civilization was poured into its architecture, and into the innovations and achievements of its commercial building in particular. The important story of the esthetic and structural evolution of commercial building in America is just being pieced together today. Except for a few well-publicized names and landmarks—the office buildings of Louis Sullivan, the early Chicago skyscrapers—we are only tentatively aware of its amazing continuity, the number of its monuments, and its important implications for contemporary architecture.

The roots of American commercial architecture are found in the eighteenth century, in England and on the Continent, in the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. The growth of manufacturing and the creation of a new industrial economy and a new social class inevitably led to a new kind of architecture. In the United States, constantly improving technology meant greatly increased industry, which called for larger and more complex factories. Distribution was aided by the spreading railroads, which, in turn, required special structures of their own. With growing manufacturing and transportation, trade rose in volume, and business buildings were constructed on a fantastic scale in the mushrooming cities. Life in America was less inhibited by traditional conventions, its evolving environment less limited by a large, inflexible body of pre-existing architecture. Those very elements of unrestricted expansion, commercialism and license that have been best known to date for their negative cultural aspects were positive forces for architectural progress. This greater freedom led to an unprecedented kind of building, radical in its structural and functional details, specifically serving the new institutions. The technology that made the factory and the railroad possible also created one of the most revolutionary innovations in the history of architecture: the metal skeleton frame.

METAL construction grew out of two pressing problems: the need for greater strength and for fireproof materials in the larger commercial and industrial buildings of the day. That iron was also used as a good, cheap way of imitating more expensive materials is only incidental, an inevitable part of the introduction of any new material or technique. Although it had long been an architectural material, the development of the structural possibilities of iron and its substitution for wood has a relatively recent history. Iron columns were employed in English mills in the eighteenth century, and as early as 1801 the Englishmen Boulton and Watt had developed an interior factory framing system of cast-iron columns and beams. James Fairbairn, in the '30's and '40's, improved this method by substituting wrought iron for the ceiling beams, where more flexibility was needed. In America, cast-iron columns appeared in factories in the first half of the nineteenth century, but the lack of foundries and the short supply of the material kept its use from being widespread until after 1850. Even as early as 1830, John Haviland had used a pre-

*continued on page 27*

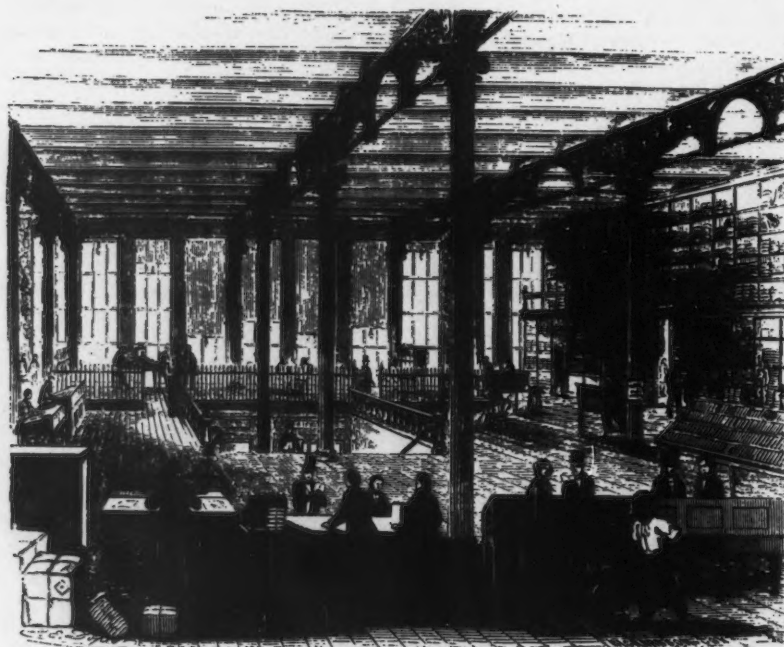
1932: PHILADELPHIA SAVINGS FUND SOCIETY BUILDING  
by Howe and Lescaze.





1854: HARPER AND BROTHERS BUILDING, New York City, by John B. Corlies and James Bogardus.

Courtesy Brown Bros.



The counting room of the Harper Building, from *The Harper Establishment, or How the Story Books Are Made*, by Jacob Abbott, Harper and Brothers, 1855.

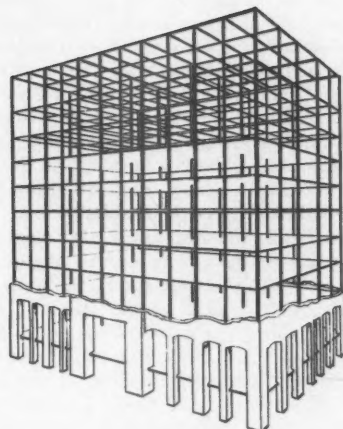
## ARCHITECTURAL FRONTIERS *continued*

fabricated, cast-iron front for a bank in Pottsville, Pennsylvania. It was in this country, however, just before 1850, that one of the most important steps was taken in the development of the self-supporting metal frame. In 1848-49, James Bogardus erected a factory on Centre and Duane Streets in New York, based on an ingenious system of construction that he had patented in the '40's. This new method used iron wall panels, piers, columns and beams fastened together in such a way that the frame supported the floors, making the startling advance of eliminating the traditional masonry bearing wall. Moreover, Bogardus had visions of the skyscraper, seeing the possibilities of unlimited height once the restrictions of the heavy bearing wall were removed.

In 1854, Bogardus and John B. Corlies designed and erected one of the most advanced and influential buildings of the day. This new plant, for the publishing firm of Harper and Brothers—which had suffered a disastrous million-dollar fire the previous year—employed Bogardus' iron framing and façade, with some masonry walls. As Turpin Bannister has pointed out, it was a remarkable structure, in its co-ordinated program of protection against fire through the utilization of incombustible materials, the elimination of vertical shaftways, the separation of the manufacturing process from the selling, editorial and storage functions, and the use of two buildings with an open courtyard between. Only the eventual enclosure of the metal structural members by masonry fireproofing was missing. This metal framing consisted of cast-iron columns supporting cast- and wrought-iron girders, across which were placed partly concealed wrought-iron ceiling beams, similar to I-beams. Until this date, no wrought-iron beams of a suitable size for this purpose had been rolled in the United States. The year 1854 marked their first production in Pittsburgh and Trenton, and their first use in American building. Interestingly enough, those in the Harper Building were produced by Peter Cooper's mill in Trenton, New Jersey, and similar ceiling beams were made the following year for Cooper's "Scientific Institution" in New York.

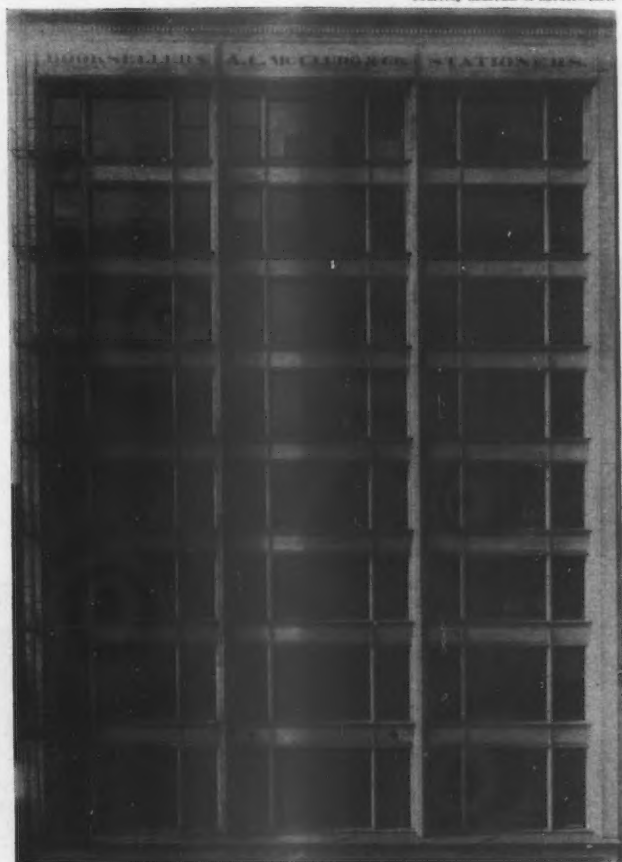
In its concern with fireproofing and metal construction, the Harper Building was an important work with serious implications for the future. In addition, its design was functional in the best twentieth-century esthetic sense. Structure was frankly in the open, as in the columns and girders, or clearly indicated, as in the ridge lines where brick ceiling arches sprang from the beams. Even the use of cast decoration on the girders had its structural purpose; it was not irrelevant, Victorian camouflage, but served to make the material heaviest at the greatest points of stress. The rigidity of the iron frame permitted the use of large areas of glass and a repetition of identical patterns of glass and cast iron—not without similarity to the highly simplified, equally mechanical rhythms of glass-and-metal architecture today.

**I**RON not only changed the shape of architecture, it changed the face of America. In the 1850's, '60's and '70's, rows of buildings with cast-iron fronts, even whole streets, appeared in the business sections of most American cities. These façades are difficult to recognize today under their heavy layers of paint, unless one taps the columns and pilasters for a characteristic hollow sound. Because they were commonly designed in Italianate or French Second Empire style to emulate the stone and marble palaces of Europe, they have been contemptuously labeled the "American Metallic Renaissance." Painted white or cream, these façades satisfied American yearnings for an imported architectural manner of traditional grandeur, and they also possessed an undeniable charm and vigor of their own. This is still discernible in such existing blocks in New York as Worth and Thomas Streets in the textile center, the Haughwout Store at Broadway and Broome Street, and, until the recent fire, in the old Wanamaker Building, originally the A. T. Stewart store. Even the black coat of paint given most of these buildings by the somber late Victorians fails to destroy the pleasant rhythms of the well-proportioned, colonnaded fronts with the large expanses of glass that re-



*Above: Schematic diagram, Chicago skeleton construction of the 1880's.*

*Courtesy Museum of Modern Art.*



**1900:** MCCLURG BUILDING, Chicago, Illinois, by Holabird and Roche. Bogardus' iron framing for the Harper Building was the direct ancestor of the first true skyscraper in Chicago in the 1880's. The wide window areas of these characteristic glass and metal façades, made possible by skeletal construction, were a well-established feature by the turn of the century.

## ARCHITECTURAL FRONTIERS *continued*

sulted from the strength of the pre-cast iron units.

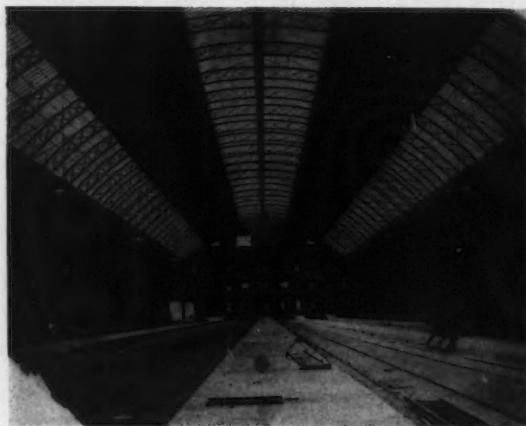
As streets of iron fronts became commonplace, the more daring building forms made possible by the new metal construction increased in number. Large exposition halls, like the "Crystal Palaces" of 1853 and 1876 in New York and Philadelphia, utilized the new glass and iron technology to enclose vast exhibition areas for the new products of industry, and these buildings were the talk of their own day. The commercial arcade flourished in a new form, spanning huge open spaces with exposed iron framing, to accommodate large numbers of offices and shops, the structure embellished with ornate and fanciful cast-iron trim. The Cleveland Arcade, designed by John M. Eisenmann and George H. Smith in 1888-90, and still in use today, is typical of the structural and commercial trends of the time. A late, full-blown product of the Iron Age, rather than one of its pioneering experiments, this building is a particularly noteworthy example of the architectural philosophy and practice of its day. The exposed framing was exploited for its psychological and esthetic effect as well as for its structural advantages; the display of conspicuous size and technical innovation served as a visual measure of the growing prestige of the commercial community. Characteristically, the building's backers included such financial entrepreneurs as Myron T. Herrick, L. V. Harkness and John D. Rockefeller.

Of the new building forms, the great railway train sheds were perhaps the most dramatic. One of the best of these was constructed for the first Grand Central Depot, built on the site of the present terminal at a cost of about three million dollars by that fabulous railroader, Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt. Modeled after London's St. Pancras, the Grand Central train shed spanned two hundred feet, ten feet less than its English prototype. According to railway authority Carroll L. V. Meeks, it was the largest interior in the United States at the time, setting the style for most of the huge, single-span train sheds that followed until the end of the century. Its handsome trusses, designed by R. G. Hatfield, were in the form of complete semicircular arches springing directly from the ground, tied at the bottom by a rod enclosed in a pipe

under the surface of the tracks. Structurally, Grand Central was one of the marvels of America, second only to the Capitol at Washington in popular esteem. Stylistically, it mirrored the tragic nineteenth-century schism between architect and engineer. As was so often true of new building types, technical progress, though much admired, was carefully provided with an academic disguise. Utility, efficiency and the new technology were well expressed in the impressive train shed, while the architect, John B. Snook, lavished formal architectural design on the more conventional, L-shaped building that enclosed it on two sides. It is in the structure itself, however, behind the academic façades, that we find the unmistakable vitality that was characteristic of the best architecture of the Victorian Age.

*continued on page 30*

Courtesy New York Central System.



**1869-71:** GRAND CENTRAL DEPOT, New York City, by John B. Snook and R. G. Hatfield.

**1956:** ST. LOUIS AIRPORT, by Hellmuth, Yamasaki and Leinweber.







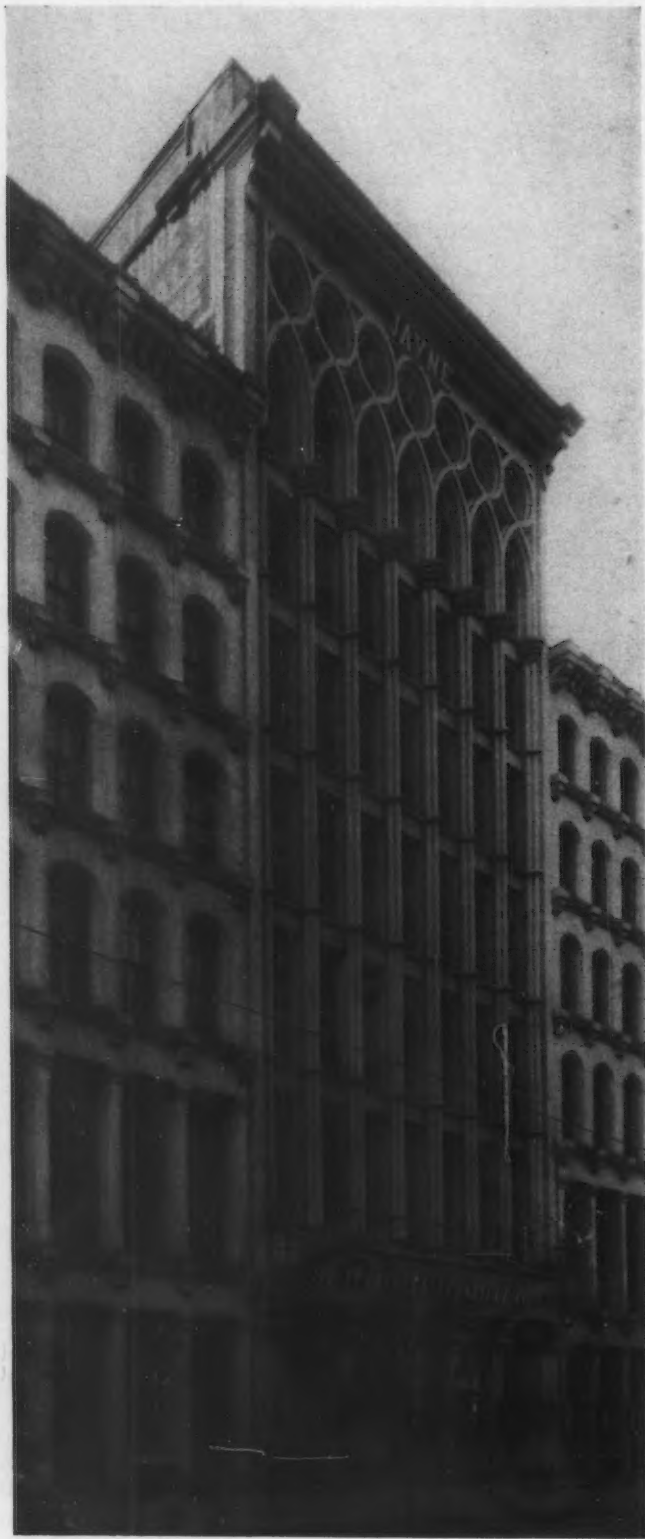
Hedrich-Blessing photo.

**1888-90: THE CLEVELAND ARCADE,**  
by John M. Eisenmann and George H. Smith.

## ARCHITECTURAL FRONTIERS

*continued*

1849-50: THE JAYNE BUILDING, Philadelphia,  
by John J. Johnston and Thomas U. Walter.



Cortlandt V. D. Hubbard photo.

With the end of the nineteenth century and the eventual substitution of the electric locomotive, the high-ceilinged train shed became obsolete. The problem of the transportation enclosure and the spanning of great spaces continued into the twentieth century in new forms, expressive of a new era. Reinforced concrete has supplanted iron as today's material of experiment and progress; its imaginative use has led to unprecedented space enclosures of a new and often startling beauty. The recent St. Louis airport, by Hellmuth, Yamasaki and Leinweber, shows how another kind of structure of remarkable grace and efficiency is being achieved in today's utilitarian building.

OF ALL commercial structures, the tall building is most popularly accepted as the universal symbol of American architecture. Although the perfection of the passenger elevator and the development of fireproof construction made its realization possible, the skyscraper is the direct descendant of Bogardus' ingenious arrangement of iron columns and beams. Between this early metal frame and the present steel skeleton lies the little-known work of some of America's great bridge engineers—James B. Eads and the St. Louis Bridge, John and Washington Roebling and the Brooklyn Bridge—and the experiments that pioneered the use of structural steel, a story with all of the excitement and incredibility of a dime novel. Once the technical problems were solved, rising land costs made the final exercises in the giant office building inevitable: the Woolworth Building, the Daily News Building, the Empire State Building, Rockefeller Center are the notorious monuments of the 1920's and '30's. Following Sullivan's early design solutions of the 1880's, however, the esthetic of the skyscraper did not catch up with its construction until 1932, in Howe and Lescaze's Philadelphia Savings Fund Society Building. Handsome and logical relationship of appearance to structure still make this Philadelphia building the outstanding American example of modern skyscraper design.

The motivations for the commercial palace and the skyscraper were never purely structural or economic; there were important psychological aspects as well. Man's timeless dream of the tall building, his desire to record his ambitions and accomplishments in permanent architectural form, took on new importance with his increasing business success. The growing wealth and activity of the nineteenth-century businessman were increasingly reflected in the character of the buildings he commissioned. He built not just to house his enterprises, but to define his stature in the community. This factor of prestige, as well as more practical needs, produced America's earliest tall buildings, even before the restrictions of masonry construction were overcome.

Among these proto-skyscrapers is the Jayne Building, an unusual and influential structure that still stands in Philadelphia, built in 1849-50 for Dr. David Jayne, a patent medicine magnate, at a cost of over half a million dollars. Begun by John J. Johnston, it was completed by Thomas U. Walter, later architect of the wings and dome of the United States Capitol. This remarkable building must have been a spectacular addition to the Philadelphia sky line of a century ago. Rising to a striking ten stories, totaling more than 130 feet, including a "Castellated Gothic" observation tower that burned in 1872, it must have seemed a soaring colossus in a city of three- and four-story buildings, particularly without the flanking wings, which were not added until a few years later. The emphatic verticality of its Venetian Gothic façade had a double significance. It represented the most ambitious and elaborate example of a new verticality of design in commercial structures—a trend presently being documented by Winston Weisman—and it was one of the earliest influences in the professional life of the young Louis Sullivan. One of Sullivan's first jobs was as an architectural draftsman for a firm located directly opposite the Jayne Building; it would seem no accident that its boldly rising piers and strong, terminating cornice appear in the best of his later work.

"Dr. Jayne's Granite Building" was one of the first of those



**1952: LEVER HOUSE, New York City, by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill.**

impressive edifices that were to become a characteristic American expression of business success. Its best-known descendant today is Lever House, differing only in that it represents the prestige of the corporation rather than of the individual, and in the increased scale which is the stamp of twentieth-century America. The contemporary glass and steel construction of Lever House is deeply indebted to the structural innovations of the nineteenth century, and its significance as a commercial symbol is directly related to Dr. Jayne's building of over a hundred years ago.

The more familiar we become with the work of the nineteenth century, the more closely we find it connected to contemporary design. Modern architecture is no independent phenomenon; it has evolved naturally from its nineteenth-century sources. In many cases, and contrary to much popular conviction, our grandfathers were the greater pioneers, and

much of the more revolutionary work was done in the last century. Even the esthetic innovations of our own day derive from technological advances that were a characteristic contribution of the Victorian Age. One of today's architects, Ralph Walker, has gone as far as to suggest that "... the many art manifestations at present surrounding us ... indicate a continuance of Victorian influence ... the refinements and stripping down are merely evidences of the end of a period rather than the beginning of a new world." This new world does exist, however, and is far more important than its ties to the past. To look at it in the light of our increasing knowledge of its sources is refreshing and revealing; research is doing much to explode the current myth of modern architecture as a unique and isolated movement. Progress is essentially continuity, and the surprising novelty and power of nineteenth-century American building form an important part of the story.



# A SURVEY OF PAINTING IN AMERICA

*A forthcoming study by the Director of the Detroit Institute of Arts  
covers the growth of painting in America.*

BY JAMES R. MELLOW

THERE is an obituary for the little-known American painter, Winthrop Chandler, who died in 1790, in E. P. Richardson's new book, *Painting in America: The Story of 450 Years*, which reads as follows: "The world was not his enemy, but as is too common, his genius was not matured on the bosom of encouragement. Embarrassment, like strong weeds in a garden of delicate flowers, checked his enthusiasm and disheartened the man. Peace to his manes." If the situation of a small talent in the early years of the country was not promising, it was no more satisfactory for a more successful painter like John Singleton Copley. A native-born artist, Copley had learned what he could from his predecessors Smibert and Blackburn and had achieved enough financial security to make him hesitate setting up his profession in Europe. What was available to him for the study of his art, however, was not enough for the demands of his talent. Sir Joshua Reynolds, who had seen his *The Boy with a Squirrel*, had counseled him that he should take advantage of the "example and instruction" that he would have in Europe; "... you would be a valuable acquisition to the art," he wrote, "and one of the first painters in the world, provided you could receive these aids before it was too late in life, and before your manner and taste were corrupted or fixed by working in your little way in Boston."

That call of Europe issued by Reynolds was one which many American artists would answer in the generations which followed and one to which Copley himself eventually yielded. Discouraged by his prospects, he wrote to the American painter Benjamin West, then living in England, "In this country as you rightly observe there is no examples of Art,

except what is to be met with in a few prints indifferently executed, from which it is impossible to learn much. . . . I think myself peculiarly unlucky in Liveing in a place into which there has not been one portrait brought that is worthy to be call'd a Picture within my memory. . . ." Nor was the lack of "examples" the only difficulty which confronted the artists of the period. In an unaddressed draft of a letter, Copley summed up the position of art itself in his society. "A taste of painting is too much wanting in Boston to afford any kind of help; and was it not for preserving the resemblance of particular persons, painting would not be known in the place. The people generally regard it as not more than any other useful trade, as they sometimes term it, like that of carpenter, tailor, or shoemaker, not as one of the most noble arts in the world, which is not a little mortifying to me. While the arts are so regarded, I can hope for nothing either to encourage or assist me in my studies but what I receive from a thousand leagues distance, and be my improvements what they will, I shall not be benefited by them in this country, neither in point of fortune or fame."

The struggle of American artists to overcome those initial difficulties and to bring their craft to the status of an art, with the disappointments, failures and successes which occurred in the process, are chronicled in Mr. Richardson's Book. To be published in October by Thomas Y. Crowell (\$10.00), it is a valuable survey of the history of painting in America, containing sixteen color plates and one hundred seventy black and white reproductions, ranging from the early prints and drawings which illustrated accounts of the newly discovered world that were printed in Europe for the edification of a

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**George Caleb Bingham:** *THE TRAPPERS' RETURN.* An example of those painters who found their subject matter in the life of the frontier, Bingham (1811-1879) painted the trappers and raftsmen, the vigorous activities of the Missouri region in which he had grown up. As a boy he copied engravings and painted with homemade pigments. His first professional training came from a traveling artist, Chester Harding, who, passing through the territory, taught him enough of the technique to start him as a portrait painter. It is for his scenes of frontier life, however, that he is best known and remembered.

## A SURVEY OF PAINTING IN AMERICA

*continued*

curious public to the paintings of contemporary artists which, continuing the old tradition, are sent abroad to the Venice Biennale. In a commendably lucid text, Mr. Richardson documents the career of the artist in this country from his beginning stage as an itinerant jack-of-all-trades whose business was "Painting in General"\* to the later position of esteem which artists like Sargent or Mary Cassatt, though expatriate, could claim by talent and good fortune. He documents, too,

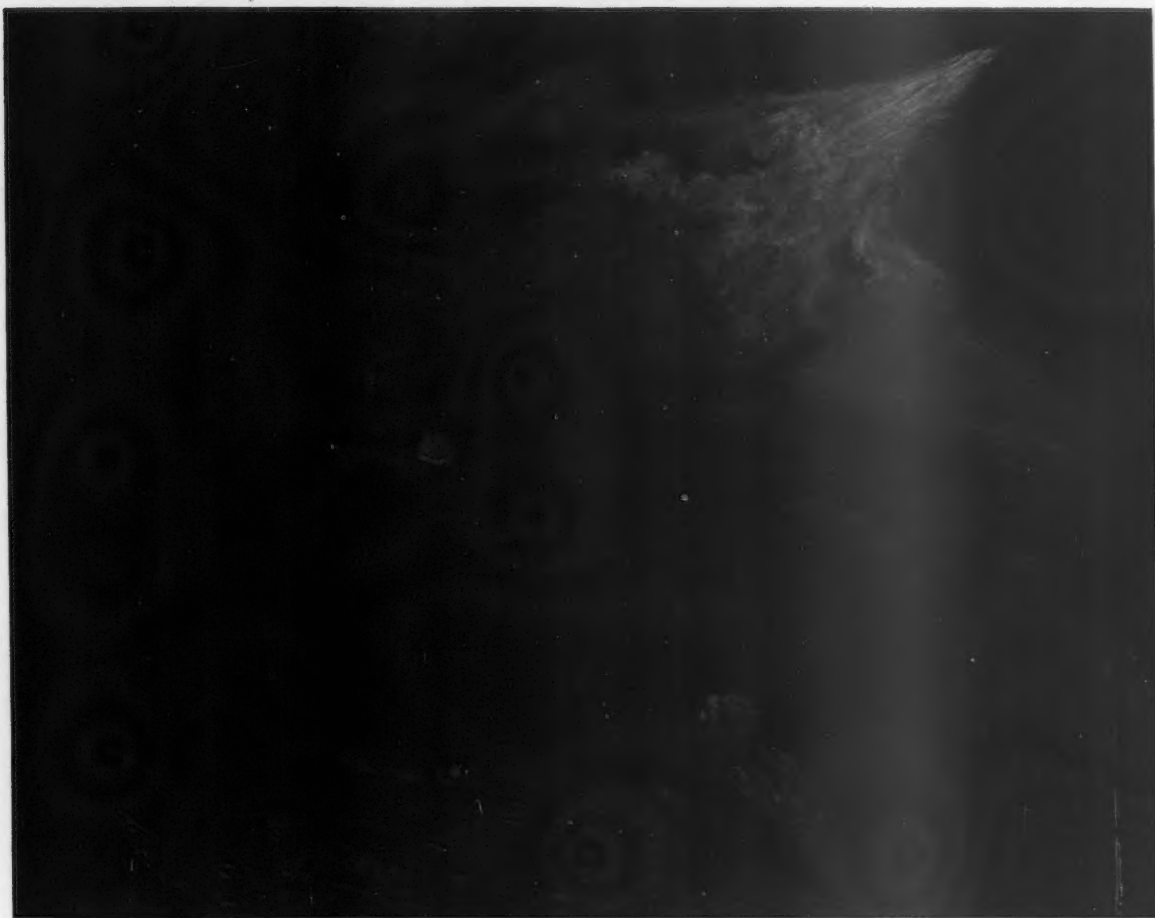
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\* William Williams, an English painter active in Philadelphia, ran this notice in the *Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser* for January 13, 1763: "William Williams Being lately returned from the West Indies, desires to acquaint the Publick that he now lives in Loxley's Court, at the Sign of Hogarth's Head, his former place of residence, where he intends to carry on his Business, viz Painting in General. Also an Evening School for the instruction of Polite Youth in the different branches of Drawing, and to sound the Hautboy, German and common flutes. . . ."



**Charles Willson Peale:** JAMES PEALE (THE LAMPLIGHT PORTRAIT). Peale's career represents one of the most interesting and varied in the story of American painting. Born in Maryland (1741-1827), he was apprenticed to a saddler as a boy. A natural craftsman, he tinkered at any occupation which presented itself, trying his hand at casting in bronze, silversmithing, clock repairing. Having been impressed by some landscapes, by an amateur artist, which he had seen on a business trip to Norfolk, he got himself a book, *The Handmaid of the Arts*, and applied himself to what became a lifetime of painting. Adding an exhibition gallery to his studio, he began a project of painting the principal figures of the Revolution, among them Washington, Franklin and Jefferson. Though his painting was often neglected for other activities, he returned to it in his last years, executing this portrait in 1822.





**Albert Pinkham Ryder: THE TEMPEST.**

Although he once studied with the romantic painter William E. Marshall and later at the National Academy of Design, Ryder (1847-1917) was essentially a self-taught painter, creating his brooding and visionary landscapes from the world of his imagination. Few commentaries upon his art are as valuable as his own, given in the course of a letter to a friend: "Have you ever seen an inch worm crawl up a leaf or a twig, and then, clinging to the very end, revolve in the air, feeling for something to reach something? That's like me. I am trying to find something out there beyond the place on which I have a footing."

*continued*

the rise of museums and national institutions, the successive waves of European influence, and the growing reaction of painters who wished to establish an art free of European dominance.

Although much has changed since Copley's time and the arts might now be said to flourish, the status of the artist in his society and his relationship to Europe have become, perhaps, more ambiguous. Where Copley looked toward Europe for the wealth of its "examples," the modern artist finds that enough of this wealth has been removed to American museums and private collections to afford whatever instruction might be needed. But what has been called into question in some quarters is the very relevance for younger painters of the "old masters" themselves and even of the more recent masters of the School of Paris. Copley looked to Europe, too, for the possibility of a milieu in which painting had the status of a profession rather than a trade. Though the public has become increasingly art-minded, only a few artists are able to sustain themselves through a lifetime of painting. Many gravitate to colleges and universities to support themselves or into the fields of commercial art. Periodic grants and funds allow others to travel abroad, if not to stay for a lifetime, as did Whistler or Cassatt, at least to remain for extensive periods. Some, promoted by a public taste for novelty, are granted a few years of deadly success, followed by neglect. For not a few, Europe still offers the milieu which Copley was looking for. As Gertrude Stein, among more recent expatriates, once put it, "It is not what France gave you but what it did not take away from you that was important."

Nevertheless, in spite of the hardships, failures and the

## A SURVEY OF PAINTING IN AMERICA *continued*

embittered lives which thread their way through Mr. Richardson's history, it would be wrong to imply, as he points out, that such discouragements have checked the growth of art. Even in 1838 an English visitor, the art critic Anna Jameson, could write that the country seemed to be swarming with painters. Not the least interesting section in Mr. Richardson's book is his account of the flourishing contemporary scene. Commenting upon the concentration of artists in New York City and upon the growth of small dealers' galleries, he notes that gallery-goers, critics and reviewers "are now faced by more than 2,000 one-man exhibitions in an eight-month session. The task of seeing all these and retaining one's enthusiasm

for talent, whether new or old, is beyond human capacity." Although his figure seems too high, his concern is justified. The prodigious vocation to the arts which the country seems to inspire makes the individual artist's situation more difficult. A further, telling observation needs no comment. "It is usual to close a survey such as this by a chapter on the present, formed of long lists of names of the younger artists of reputation at the moment of writing. But the perspective of the present changes from month to month and only time can tell who will cross that dangerous border with success. In five years such lists of names, I notice, begin to go out of date; in ten years they become sad."



**James A. McNeill Whistler:** NOCTURNE IN BLACK AND GOLD—THE FALLING ROCKET. Even in the more receptive climate of Europe, American artists encountered some difficulties. This painting, attacked by Ruskin as "flinging a pot of paint in the public's face," set off a violent controversy which resulted in Whistler's suing Ruskin for libel.

# THE BACKGROUNDS OF AMERICAN PRINTMAKING

*Alternating between the fine arts and the mass market,  
American graphic art can claim some notable achievements.*

BY MARTICA SAWIN

UNTIL the latter half of the nineteenth century, printmaking in America was primarily a popular art, the principal medium of visual communication, through posters and illustrations for books, magazines and weekly journals, or through individual prints of favorite subjects, designed and priced for mass consumption.\* What is now known as the fine print or the artist's print was virtually non-existent in a young country which had little tolerance for non-utilitarian arts. Before 1800 one finds portraiture, the recording of events and simple, pointed illustration, all of which could be considered to serve a function. During the major part of the nineteenth century printmaking flourished in an unprecedented fashion as the sole means of illustration, but then the rise of photography and photo-engraving gradually forced the reshaping of printmaking, no longer feasible for commercial purposes, into an artist's art—into printmaking as we know it today.

Before the rise of the painter-etcher tradition a separation of artist and engraver prevailed, the latter generally a highly skilled craftsman who would copy an original painting in mezzotint, for example, or engrave an artist's drawing on a wood block. There were, of course, exceptions; some of the woodcuts of the Colonial period were designed and executed by the same hand, and there are isolated instances in which the engraver was also an artist of some ability, as in the case of Boston's Peter Pelham (1684-1751) or the prolific wood engraver Alexander Anderson (1775-1870). It was the work of the nineteenth-century French etchers, however, and the widely acclaimed etchings of Whistler which finally stimulated American artists to adopt printmaking as a fine art. Furthermore, to the example of the great artist-printmakers, Dürer, Seghers, Rembrandt, Goya, was added the exciting "discovery" of the Japanese color woodcut. Yet graphic art remained comparatively inconspicuous in this country as a self-conscious art until the tremendous upsurge of the past two decades, during which American graphic artists have been pushing forward the technical frontiers of all forms of printmaking, creating what is virtually a new art and a new means of expression.

Examples of prints of American origin from the early Colonial period are extremely rare. The first known woodcut is the seal for the Massachusetts Bay Colony, a portrait of the Reverend Richard Mather, executed by John Foster, the first printer in Boston. By the second quarter of the eighteenth century, engravers' shops had been established in the cities of Boston and Philadelphia which produced bookplates, billheads and other work for the local merchants, as well as engravings of subjects of general interest, such as the *View of Harvard*, published by a Boston engraver in 1726. Announcement of the publication of an edition of prints was made in the newspapers, together with the "picture shops" at which they could be purchased, as "A prospective view of the Pennsylvania Hospital, one shilling plain and two shillings colored, engraved by James Claypoole, Jr." The work of this period was generally line engraving, incised on copper, although

\*The designation "print" for present purposes applies to any printed design executed by hand on plate, block or stone, as opposed to photographic means of reproduction.

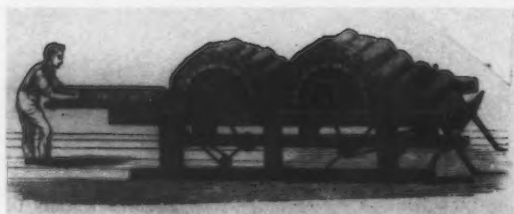
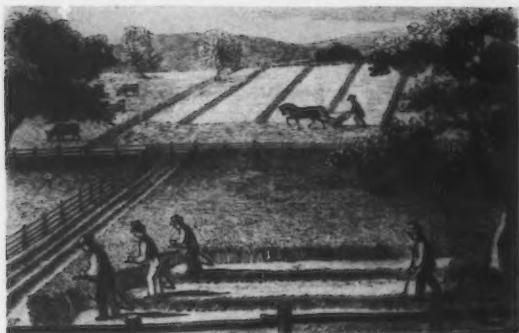
mezzotint, already common in England, was used increasingly for portraits, because of the opportunities it afforded for a more painterly chiaroscuro. Peter Pelham, an accomplished English engraver in mezzotint, settled in this country about 1725 and produced portraits of prominent citizens, chiefly the Boston ministers who were not only the religious leaders of the community, but also the literary class.

One of the most famous and highly prized of all American prints is Paul Revere's *Boston Massacre*, a spirited graphic description of the event, hastily executed as a propaganda piece. Revere's shop also turned out portraits, views of Boston and an engraving of the short-lived wooden monument in honor of the repeal of the Stamp Act. Other renowned prints of the Revolutionary period were Amos Doolittle's engravings of the battles of Concord and Lexington, literal accounts of the disposition of forces, executed in 1775, reportedly after sketches by Ralph Earl. Not long after the Revolution, with the emergence of conflicting forces in the young government of the United States, the political cartoon made its appearance, vehement, but crudely executed, in line engraving. Actually, what may be considered the first American cartoon was published by Benjamin Franklin in his *Pennsylvania Gazette* of May 9, 1754, a snake whose broken segments symbolize the divided colonies.

It was the nineteenth century, however, which became the Golden Age of American Engraving. This refers both to the heyday of engraving as illustration and to the production of individual prints or "pictures" which found their way into homes across the country. Printmaking took on the proportions of a thriving industry with facilities for mass production and widespread distribution and sale. Cityscape, landscape, important events such as the landing of Lafayette, the launching of the *Fulton*, Perry's victory on Lake Erie, military and naval exploits, were among the popular subjects. Mr. Nathaniel Currier could write to his distributors at the middle of the century, "Pictures are now a necessity," a statement to which the success of his own establishment offers ample testimony. The prints of Currier and Ives, numbering well over seven thousand separate editions in the years 1835-85, ranged in price from six cents to two dollars, wholesale, and were sold from pushcarts in the streets of New York, by shops in the larger towns, and were carried by peddlers throughout the country. They were designed by numerous artists, including such regulars as Louis Maurer and Fanny Palmer and the cartoonist Thomas Worth, executed by expert lithographers, and colored by impecunious art students for a penny apiece. Lithography rose rapidly in this country, following its introduction by Bass Otis in 1819, and there were many other printing houses operating in the fashion of Currier and Ives, although none on such a scale. There were, of course, extremes in quality, and it is not in the light of artistic merit, but as a record of the popular taste of an expanding nation that these prints must be regarded.

Before the days of photo-engraving on metal plates, periodicals relied largely on the wood engraving for decora-





Above: One of the foremost contributors to the development of wood engraving in America, **Alexander Anderson**, was trained as a doctor, but returned to the engraver's profession which had attracted him in his boyhood after his entire family was wiped out in the yellow fever epidemic of 1795. Anderson's life spans almost an entire century, from 1775 to 1880, during which he produced many thousands of engravings, chiefly book illustrations, ranging from Biblical and mythological subjects to technical diagrams and scenes from contemporary life. Although his prints, which he designed as well as executed, are lacking in imaginative flair, they display an expert draftsmanship and meticulous rendering. Because his fine and exacting craftsmanship raised the standards of performance and his vast output did much to popularize the medium, Anderson is often called the father of American wood engraving.

Right: The cartoon entered our national political life at an early date. The anonymous line engraving **CONGRESSIONAL PUGILISTS**, crude but explicit, appeared in 1798. It depicts the first outbreak of physical violence on the floor of Congress, as Matther Lyon, a Republican of Vermont, and Roger Griswold, a Federalist of Connecticut, battle with cane and tongs over the Alien and Sedition Acts. It would seem that Americans did not regard their Congressmen with undue reverence. In style this print is not unlike the work of William Charles, who achieved fame as the first American political cartoonist with his John Bull caricatures during the War of 1812.

## AMERICAN PRINTMAKING *continued*

tions and illustrations. Wood engraving is different from the woodcut in that it is the incised lines which hold the ink and print the design; it is a precise and exacting medium in which the cross-cut end of a block of very hard wood (such as boxwood) is incised with the burin or graver. One of the foremost contributors to the development of this medium in America was Alexander Anderson, whose meticulous workmanship stimulated higher standards of technique and whose vast output made him widely known as a contemporary illustrator. Although Anderson designed his own blocks, the engraver was more often purely a craftsman who executed the drawings of artists. The result was that, although marvels of exquisite craftsmanship exist, engraving tended to become a tedious, mechanical process which might often alter the spirit of the original drawing.

**T**HE most renowned of the artists whose work was engraved for the popular journals was Winslow Homer, who began his career as an illustrator for *Ballou's Pictorial* in Boston and who subsequently became a regular contributor to *Harper's Weekly*, achieving fame through the drawings sent back from the front during the Civil War. These latter, as much as the paintings of his later career, earn Homer the caption of "dramatic realist," for without seeming to embellish the actual, he succeeds in capturing the frenzy and the tension of a particular moment in the trenches or the monotony and hardship of life behind the front lines. Yet Homer regarded this as hack work and wished to concentrate on painting. After the Civil War, when he was offered a permanent contract by *Harper's*, he told his brothers—so the story goes—that he would exhibit two paintings done from wartime sketches and that if they were sold he could continue painting. The paintings were sold and the contract was forgotten, although he did sporadic work for *Harper's* for another ten years. (Not until many years later did he learn that the purchaser of the two canvases was his brother Charles.) The influence of his early training as a reporter is evident throughout Homer's career as a painter in the sharpness of focus and clarity of impression, the eye for the essential and the emphasis on communication of the facts which he never outgrew despite the very different developments in art coming from abroad.

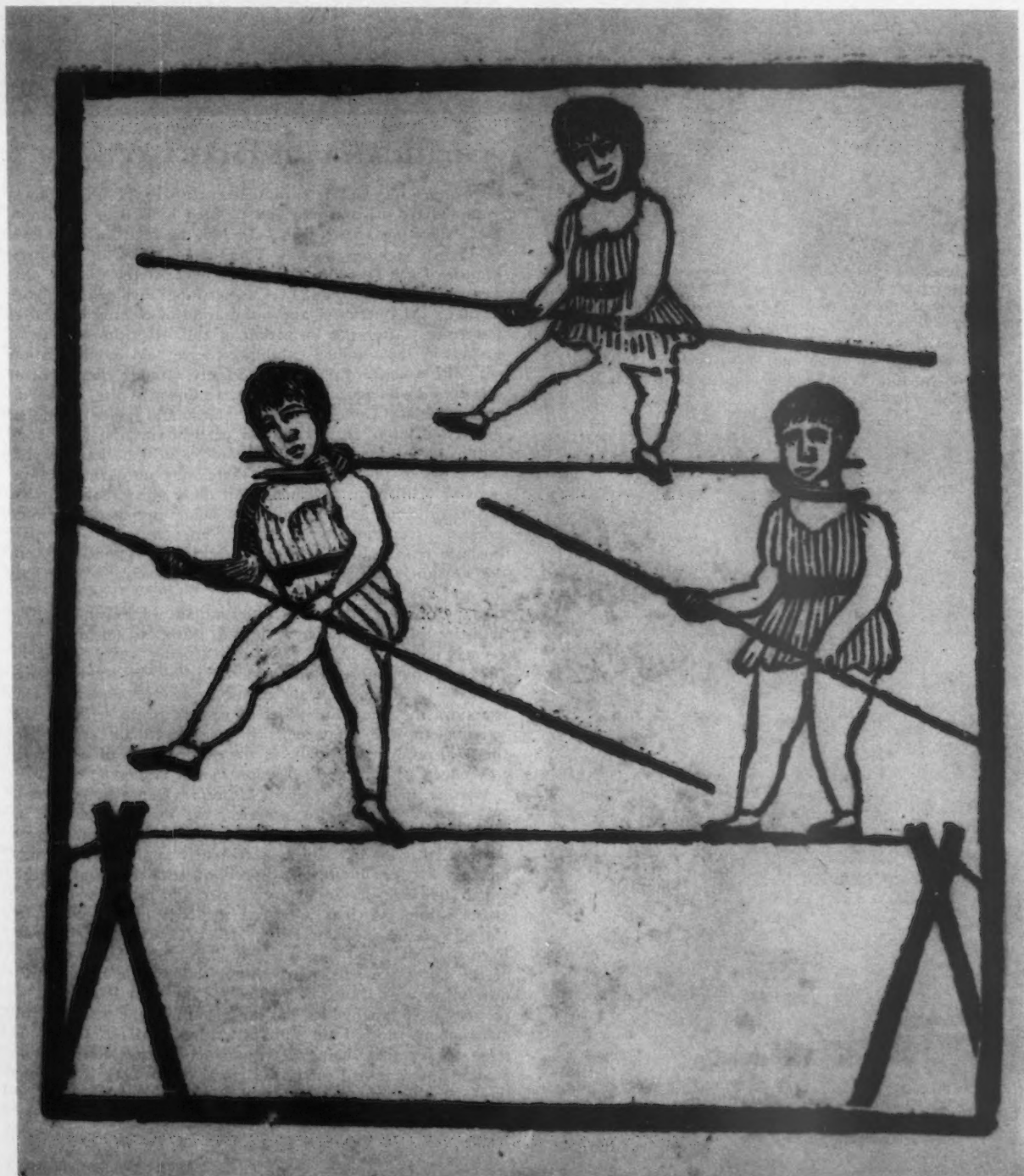
When Alexander Anderson started his career at the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were perhaps a score of professional wood engravers in this country. When wood engraving was at its height some sixty years later, *Harper's* and *Leslie's Illustrated Journal* alone employed over one hundred engravers to reproduce the drawings of numerous artist contributors. It had reached such a scale in this country



and in England that Ruskin, who felt that engravers should confine themselves to the reproduction of masterpieces, could rail against "the illustrative art industry of the modern press—enslaved to the ghastly service of catching the last gleams in the glued eyes of the daily more bestial mob." He might have conserved his rhetoric, for the medium was soon to leave the illustrator's province and become almost exclusively a fine art, as it was rapidly supplanted by the photographic half-tone in all but the most rarefied of publications.

However, in the meantime a new current was developing to which printmaking owes its ultimate survival—the rise of the painter-etcher tradition. The impetus came mainly from France, through the work that Whistler and the other American expatriates did there and through the efforts of Cadart, the Paris publisher of etchings. Concerned over the decline

*Below: MR. VILLALAVE'S COMPANY, from the Brooklyn Museum's collection of American woodcuts, advertises a traveling troupe of acrobats in 1818. The wood block was used in this direct and elementary fashion, even in Colonial days, to dramatize the contents of handbills and broadsides and to assist the unlettered. The circus posters of the early nineteenth century offer fine examples of this rudimentary but vivid application of the woodcut to popular purposes.*

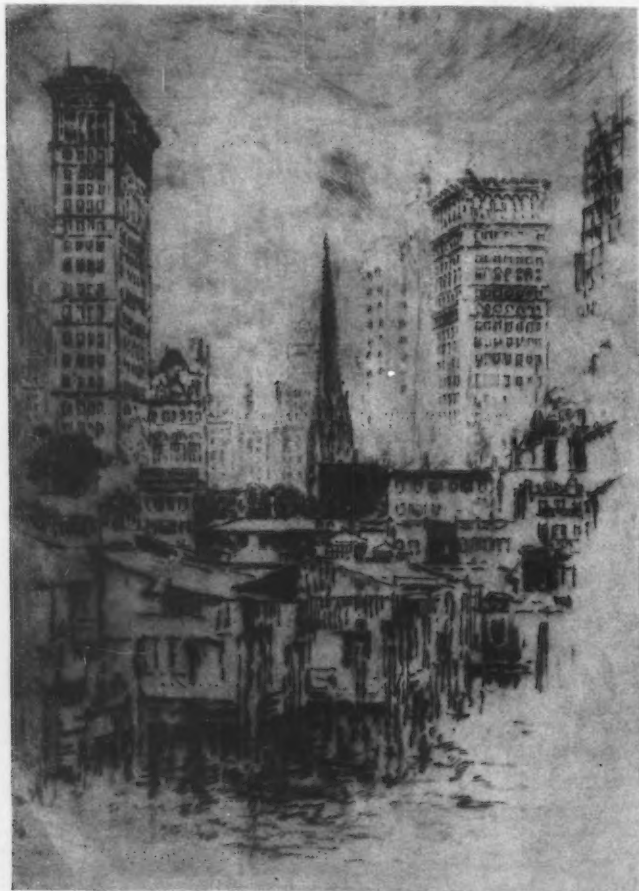




Right: **Winslow Homer**, *SURGEON AT THE FRONT*, 1862. Harper's Weekly was launched in 1858 and Homer submitted a drawing which was accepted. Other drawings followed and when the Civil War broke out, Homer served as an artist correspondent at the front. The drawings which he sent back to Harper's emphasize neither the glorious nor the sordid aspects of war, but endeavor to present a matter-of-fact account of the soldier's life in and behind the front lines, related with an eye for the essential and scrupulous attention to the facts.



Below: **Joseph Pennell**, *TRINITY CHURCH FROM THE RIVER*. One of the scores of American etchers in the Whistler tradition, Pennell was the first to focus on the American cityscape, causing a critic to remark, "I see you have made architecture out of the New York buildings." His ability to see the artistic possibilities of industrial scenes and the commercial buildings of New York and Pittsburgh marks the new role of the industrial landscape in American art.



#### AMERICAN PRINTMAKING *continued*

of printmaking, Cadart encouraged artists in the impressionist group to try this medium and devoted himself to publishing and exhibiting artists' prints. In 1866 he held an exhibition of French etchings in New York and formed an American branch of the French Society of Etchers. At the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876, the etchings included a number of plates by Americans, and publication of etching by dealers was rising. After the formation of the American Society of Etchers in 1885, annual exhibitions were held in conjunction with the American Watercolor Society. Among the artists of this period who adopted etching were Edwin White, J. M. Falconer, Mielatz, Thomas and Mary Moran and James D. Smillie. F. Weitenkampf, former curator of prints at the New York Public Library and principal chronicler of American graphic art, writes of this period that "there were no daring innovations or brilliant achievements, but there was some creditable accomplishment and the soil was being prepared." Neither subject, predominantly landscape, nor treatment was particularly remarkable. With the exception of Thomas Hovenden's etchings of his genre paintings, expression of American life was absent.

Many of these artists strove to emulate the example set by Whistler in his popular series of European etchings, the French series begun in 1858, the Thames series issued in 1871 and the impressionistic Venice series. Whistler's efforts to make of etching a truly artistic form can be seen as one examines the numerous states of various prints with all the scraping-out and refinements involved, and are evident in the final product, especially in the exquisiteness of the transitory effects of light and reflection in the Venice series.

Writing in 1887 for *Harper's Magazine*, Henry James stated, "When today we look for 'American art' we find it mainly in Paris. When we find it out of Paris, we at least find a great deal of Paris in it." This is particularly applicable to printmaking, for the finest work was unquestionably that of the expatriates Whistler and Mary Cassatt, and even many of the artists whose drawings appeared regularly as engravings in *Harper's*—George Abbey, Frank Millet, Charles S. Reinhart—lived in France and England. The musings of James on one of the latter are particularly interesting in the light of his own subsequent choice of residence: "And yet Paris, for all she may have taught him, has not given him the mystic sentiment—about which I am perhaps writing nonsense. Is it nonsense to say that, being very much an incarnation of the modern international spirit, the moral of his work is possibly the inevitable want of finality, of intrinsic character in that



sweet freedom? Does the cosmopolite necessarily pay for his freedom by a want of function—the impersonality of not being representative? Must one be a little narrow to have a sentiment and very local to have a quality or at least a style?"

The pertinence of these questions to the position of the American artist is obvious; the ramifications are too numerous to discuss here. It is hard to believe that James, who abhorred the "sin of ugliness," could have preferred the totally American bias of the plainspoken Winslow Homer. The dilemma was a pervasive one at this time—can it be American and still be art?—and many artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could only find the answer in Europe. The poles which are represented by Homer and Whistler—the one addicted to the hard facts, to a tough, realistic brand of American art, the other to pure estheticism; the one at home in the trade of the illustrator, the other the arch-exponent of art for art's sake—dramatize a persisting conflict in American art, but one which our great artists—Ryder is an example—will always transcend.

One of Whistler's indirect contributions to American graphic art is the interest which he stimulated in the Japanese woodcut. The Japanese color prints revealed whole new areas of possibility in the woodcut medium. Arthur W. Dow began to experiment with color woodcuts after Japanese methods in this country in 1902, but it was not until the 1930's that American artists seriously began to explore the potentials. Louis Schanker is responsible for important creative experimentation with the color woodcut more recently, and other artists who have produced outstanding work in this medium are Yunkers, Moy and Frascioni. The more confining, less flexible technique of wood engraving on the other hand has become almost a lost art. Misch Kohn is one of the few contemporary print-makers of note who have managed to use it with great skill and effectiveness.

**T**HERE was a general decline in printmaking during the early decades of this century, and little attempt to adapt it to new modes of expression. The nineteenth-century tradition persisted in the etchings of John Taylor Arms and a host of other artists, highly skilled, but lacking in a certain inventiveness and vitality. Among the forces which contributed to the resurgence of graphic art during the 1930's were the establishment of print workshops under the Federal Art Project and the removal of Hayter's Atelier 17 to New York. American artists may now, in fact, be said to lead the way in exploring new means of exploiting traditional media and in developing new printing techniques such as the cellocut and the monolith or combining familiar media to achieve new effects. If the artists avoid the pitfalls of making technique an end in itself and are able to use the new means at their command to serve the idea they wish to convey, to heighten or enhance their individual communications, American printmaking can look forward to a period of rich and exciting production.

It is also important that there be an enlarged appreciation of and demand for original prints, for the very function of printmaking is multiple production, and it is the one visual art which *can* flourish through a large public following. In France the tradition of the beautiful limited-edition book, illustrated with etchings or lithographs, still persists, but in this country the print is generally conceived of as a work of art to be framed and hung on the wall; attempts to publish them in folio form have not generally been successful. Unless the public—individuals, schools, libraries, business concerns—avail themselves of the opportunity to own original works of art at low prices, this current renaissance of fine printmaking is not likely to sustain itself. It would be all the more lamentable since we face an opportunity now to bring together the "art" print and the public print, and for the first time close the cultural gap which has always been a part of our printmaking history.



**James Whistler, Jo, 1861.** Whistler learned the etcher's technique while working for the geodetic coast survey and became not only the foremost of American etchers, but one of the first American artists to use the print purely as an art form. His etchings of French, English and Venetian scenes, as well as figure studies, achieved great popularity in this country and were far-reaching in their influence on several generations of American etchers.

# THE LEGEND AND THE LOSS: PAINTINGS OF THE OLD WEST

BY VERNON YOUNG



Carl Bodmer:  
PEHRISKA-RUPHA, aquatint;  
courtesy Kennedy Galleries.

"The Landscape Views on the Missouri, Buffalo Hunts, and other scenes, taken by my friend Mr. Catlin, are correct delineations of the scenes they profess to represent, as I am perfectly well acquainted with the country, having passed through it more than a dozen times." (Certificate by John A. Sanford, for George Catlin's *Letters & Notes on the North American Indians*, 1841)

"Lie to us—Dance us back our tribal morn!" (Hart Crane)

AN ASTONISHED visitor to the New York studio of Ralph Albert Blakelock—so runs a legend from the nineties—found the enthralled painter dividing his labors between a shadowy landscape-in-progress and anxious simulation of Indian drums on the piano; by way of explanation the agitated artist, waving an accusing finger at spectral figures under the trees in the canvas, exclaimed hopelessly—"I can't make them dance!" . . . The anecdote moves in a number of suggestive directions. By wishing to evoke, in the crepuscular elegance of those silhouetted groves distilled from Western landscapes visited in his youth, Indians so palpable as to be heard, the Manhattan-born romantic was rehearsing a century-long pathos—the pathos of the Arcadian ideal. Even as that century entered its last decade—and Blakelock his, for after 1899 he lived solely in the moon-ridden landscape of insanity—the Wilderness Indian was irretrievable. Nobody could make him dance.

In fact, to do so on his own terms had virtually constituted a criminal offense since 1884 when the Plains Tribes were forbidden to gather for the Sun Dance Ritual. Five years later, in a final pacifistic effort to reduce tensions in the implacable Sioux resistance, a Paiute visionary conceived the Ghost Dance, purportedly revealed to him in a dream during a total eclipse of the sun on January 1, 1889 (the very image might have come from Blakelock's disordered mind!). The resulting fervor was not interpreted by the U. S. military in the West as conciliatory, and the denouement implicit in the Westward aggression was achieved definitively by the massacre of three hundred Indians who surrendered at Wounded Knee in December of 1890—whereby the official metaphor of the Bureau of Census a few months previously, that the "frontier" was closed, acquired ratification in blood. The whole swift terminal sequence resounds with mingled overtones of epic drama and incredible hokum. Of course: we have been thoroughly conditioned by the vulgate. It had all happened before and been converted so readily and often into popular art forms that even in 1890 the tawdry myth and tragic reality were indistinguishable.

With the passing of the genuinely wild West, the painting of Wild-West subjects became even more securely the domain of the anecdotalist, to be represented in its prime by Fernand Lundgren, Henry Farny and the Full-Tilt school of cowboy-Indians-and-cavalry illustration—Frederic Remington, Charles Russell, H. W. Hansen, Dan Smith, Charles Schreyvogel. To compare the fretted-gold encampments of Blakelock with, for instance, Henry Farny's *The Last Vigil* is not to exaggerate the incompatible modes in which the Western idea had been expressed throughout the era. The breaching of a primal frontier, accomplished in little more than a hundred years—



**Ralph Albert Blakelock:** MOONLIGHT, oil on canvas, 1889-1892; collection Brooklyn Museum.

considerably fewer if you date it, justifiably, from the conflict of interests in the beaver trade—left no witnesses to its phenomena more than adequately equipped to transform their observations into art. This is not surprising, when one considers the exigencies of the historical moment. But it is regrettable. What remains may be viewed in a thousand museums, galleries, regional magazines and volumes of Americana (in or out of print): a pictorial chaos of government survey sketches, scenic Wonders, Redskin forays, animal hunts and pioneer pastorals, together with sundry other enlistments, ranging from the minutely inconsequential to the massively idealistic, executed at bewilderingly inconsistent levels of skill.

**T**HE spectacle has value, however, beyond its documentary fascination for the historian. In its total reach and in its particular concentrates it is a regional version of the larger

impulse loosely called romantic. Romanticism was, and is, something deeper than an art movement. It has represented, whatever else incidentally, the struggle of modern European man to escape the consequences of the accelerating materialism to which he has given conscious consent. Within this great ambivalence, the veneration and the rape of the American West—a willed nostalgia operating factually through conquest—find their meaning. In the lesser scale of it—our immediate subject—the nineteenth-century art of the frontier displays, sometimes impressively, the American's disinheritance of himself, as it were, by falsification of his living surround, which has been so nakedly observed and eloquently stated by D. H. Lawrence and, before him, Henry James in *The American Scene*. Persistently the American has demanded an intensification of his environment. He wants America to be characterized, in public speech and in art—one might say here, in the public speech of art—as *more idyllic, more gigantic, more*



## PAINTINGS OF THE OLD WEST *continued*

promising, and even *more* tragic than his discontented experience of it. Western painting has no such illustrious deceivers as Washington Allston and Thomas Cole, for instance, but these distraught masters had their effect on the frontier sequel, and the standard favorites of Western Americana collectors evince a confusion of idiom and standards upsetting to one's hope for a style relating somewhere to the unique terms of the Westward theme.

The exceptional painterly command of surface values and grouping in the genre pictures of George Caleb Bingham and William Ranney may be some reward for the neo-classical trance of their boatmen and fur hunters. But what can one say for the intolerable lucidity of Samuel Colman's laundered emigrant wagons drawn by groomed oxen across pearly wallows, the pre-Raphaelite-on-the-prairie elegance of Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait (considered for years a reliable informant of life on the plains, he painted one of the more unlikely buffalo kills on record), the forensic effusion of Emanuel Leutze's mural, *Westward the Course*, or the proto-Disney effusion of Fanny Palmer's sherbet Rockies in the Currier and Ives prints? If these are notorious prettifications, tolerated out of antiquarian tenderness, one is willing to nod sympathetically and look in a more sanguinary direction. John Mix Stanley, who appears to be a favorite in the field,<sup>1</sup> is a baffling talent. He drew sites competently for the Pacific Railroad reports, but

his best work, in Indian portraiture, it is affirmed, perished in the Smithsonian fire of 1865. One is left to wonder how this self-taught roustabout of the Indian Territory could have produced the tasteful, if curiously Italianate, landscape recently on view at the Kennedy Galleries and one of the worst excesses of the uncountable Mounted-Indian-Meets-Buffalo variations: in this case a shrimp-red Indian engages a credibly irate buffalo (from the wrong side, be it noted) on a horse from which the rockers have just been removed.

The heroic style (grandiose landscapes and back-lighted bison) with a glossier finish was consummated by Albert Bierstadt, whose fluctuating reputation stays respectable in the Short Grass galleries, New Bedford, Düsseldorf and Rome (where he painted the Octavian Arch in the manner of the Canalettos) qualified Bierstadt for his suave mastery of the Western monumental style, composed of Yankee gigantism,

<sup>1</sup> For readers out of museum and gallery reach, the key books for consultation, generously illustrated, are Harold McCracken's *Portrait of the Old West* (McGraw-Hill, 1952) and Robert Taft's *Artists and Illustrators of the Old West, 1859-1900* (Scribner's, 1953). However, the Metropolitan Museum of Art publication, *Life in America* (New York, 1939), which illustrated a loan exhibition of 290 paintings, is an intriguing anthology, encircling the Western subject with comparative material.

Albert Bierstadt: INDIAN BUFFALO HUNT; courtesy M. Knoedler & Co. Inc.





**J. Beard:** *FLATBOATMEN*, 1847; courtesy Kennedy Galleries.

Teutonic *Weltansicht* and romantic-imperial melancholy. His centaurian version of the Indian-Buffalo encounter, portentously lighted for the music of Richard Strauss, consecrated the subject beyond hope of emulation or repair.<sup>2</sup> It is only a stride from Bierstadt to the tumescent Wagnerism of Thomas Moran, who eventually found it irresistible to evoke from his boiling mountain peaks a literally emerging Spirit of the Indian.

One turns from these pinnacles of inflation to search for an indigenous honesty, less ambitious to storm the heavens above the frontier. You can find it in the illustrations of the ephemera-hunters who scoured the socially mobile West for Eastern periodicals, after 1860 increasingly—the best among them at inscribing the occupational energy, the traffic, the space-feel and the raw clutter of the outposts were, perhaps, Ogden and Yeager, Alfred Mathews, T. R. Davis and Charles Graham. You find it in the drawings and woodcuts made for the Whipple and Ives expeditions of 1853 and 1857 by H. B. Mollhausen (the same who returned to Germany and made a fortune writing Westerns in the tradition of Fenimore Cooper) or in the expertly handsome sketches of the Missouri and

Yellowstone forts by William Jacob Hays.<sup>3</sup> Until recently, the smaller decencies of the sharp-eyed hack and the architectural draftsman appeared to be the most noteworthy evaluations of the West. Having discounted the salon extraction of those landscapes and portraits which infested collections everywhere, and given one's startled reverence to that single enigmatic masterpiece of stylization, *Buffalo Hunters—Artist Unknown*,<sup>4</sup> one faced the ugly void, wherein Audubon's quadrupeds were the only pristine emblems of the wilderness commanding the title of art. But gallery directors and various anthologists of the American past have only yesterday been uncovering a wealth of surprises, buried in private collections or in historical studies of a single edition, known to a few specialists, it may be. One such surprise is a gentleman—the substantive is somehow demanded—with the odd name of Henry James Warre, about whom little has yet been asserted beyond his responsibility for a number of august but delicate land-

<sup>2</sup> The virtuosity of this painting is best appreciated in its full "aspect ratio" and high-key color reproduction. See McCracken, *op. cit.* in footnote 1.

<sup>3</sup> Hays became, for my choice, one of the best buffalo painters of all. Though a weak colorist and less accomplished with brush than pencil, he was one of the few, among a host of sensationalists, capable of apprehending a buffalo, to paraphrase Ruskin, in the plain and shaggy fact of him.

<sup>4</sup> An excellent reproduction appears in Jean Lipman's *American Primitive Painting* (p. 60, Oxford University Press, 1942).

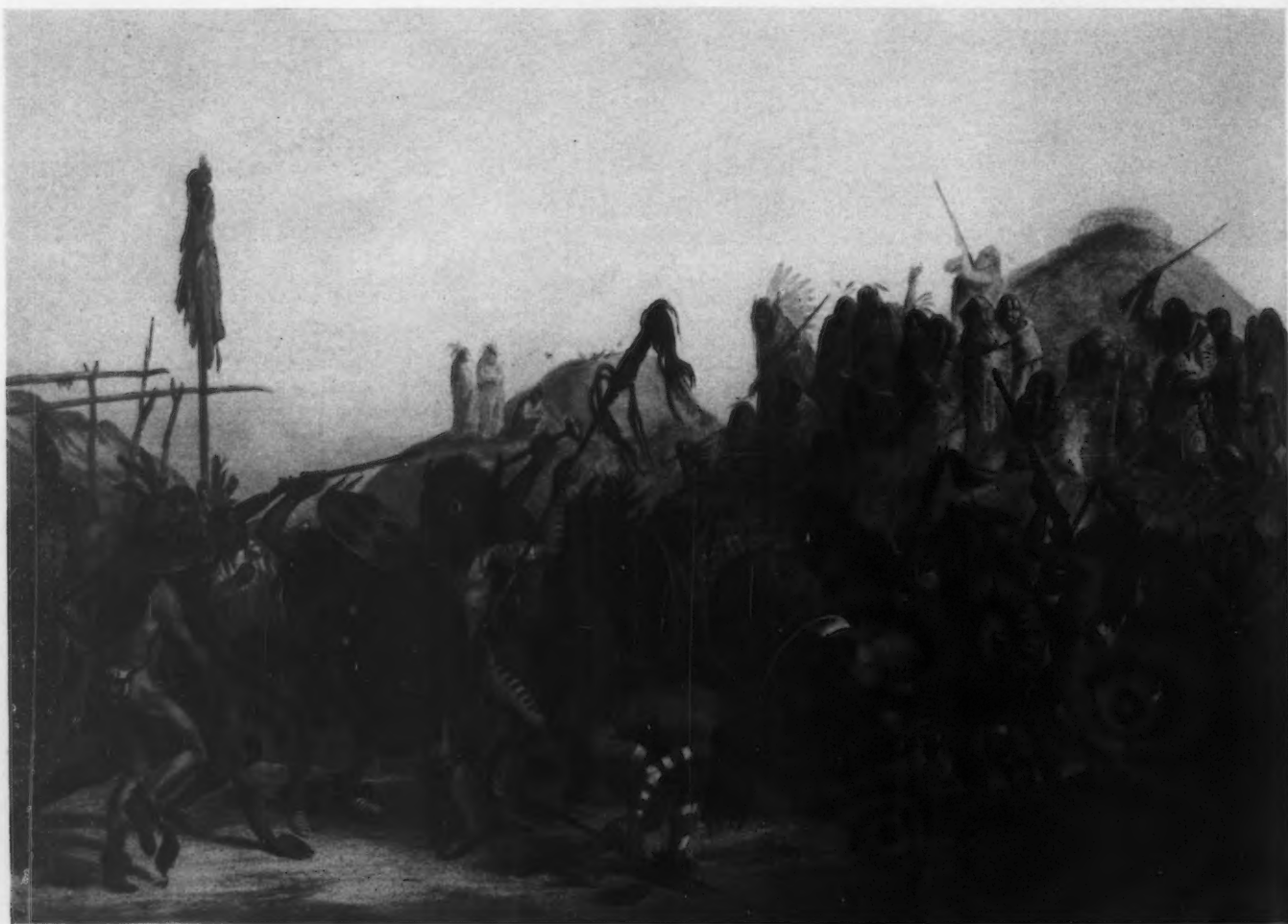
## PAINTINGS OF THE OLD WEST *continued*

scapes of the Oregon Territory in the years of the fur-trade rivalry. These *drawings* (seen in reproduction their density of texture and firmly massed contours deceive one) are in the mode of the Chaste Frontier, but the chastity is clothed in native cover: the sylvia is precisely Northwestern. The forest primeval, the rivers and the lonely fort have rarely been conveyed with so effortless an effect of mystery—and with never a hint of Paul Potter or Claude Lorrain! As in James Henry Beard's *Flatboatmen*, the very precision of the few figures gives man a sad insignificance in the clearings of his Arcadia. There is minor nobility in such art—the character of a place rendered without pictorial declamation.

**T**HE most viable conditions for wilderness painting were clearly those under which the artist-traveler worked with his eyes on the nature of the object or scene, often in the service of a patron but at least independent of populist clamor and the weight of schools. George Catlin was a staunch product of the pioneer years of Western art; in more ways than one the staunchest. He is not a new discovery, but there are signs that his painting may be reassessed in the light of our contemporary admiration for the patterned values of limner, now called "primitive" art, to which his landscapes bear some resemblance. During eight years of travel among the Indians, principally of the Upper Missouri, between 1832 and 1839, Catlin painted 310 portraits and 200 views (in oil!). In the annals of ethnography, with allowances now made and the wilder presuppositions undone, he remains a primary source, on the basis of his voluminous notes and his accurate paintings

of ceremonial properties, hunts, games, dances, diet and the rest, for the habits of the Central Plains Indian before the Great Molestation. Esthetically he is held to be negligible, a judgment unacceptable if his *paintings*, not the illustrations he personally *engraved from the originals*, are under consideration. True, he was a self-urged painter who retained serious deficiencies. Ignorant of anatomy, he could rarely get stance into an Indian portrait, and his buffaloes were preposterous except when deliberately stylized. Having decided in advance of Kilmer that only God can make a tree, Catlin declined further attempts to usurp the monopoly and simply drew Turkshead knots. From circumvention and an unknown source of taste he developed a style. His scapes with figures, particularly the animal and bird studies of his South American period, are remarkably intricate and have a lyrical subtlety of color. It seems comical for anyone to examine his landscapes for ecological authenticity, for it should be readily observed that the intrepid amateur ethnologist, stuffed to the ears with data and eighteenth-century rhetoric in behalf of the Indian as Paragon and as a Public Charge, was all the while intuitively transforming the Indian Question into self-sufficient worlds of decorative composition. He was a liar, of course, one of the most charming if you don't listen to him, a classic example of the Crèvecoeur-Cooper liars, as exposed by D. H. Lawrence, *wanting* the landscape to be at one with him, denying the inimical qualities of the natural life. Catlin watched every detail of the self-torture rituals of the Mandans without ever abandoning his rational diction or his oversimplified faith in aboriginal serenity. His paintings enshrine the

**Carl Bodmer:** BISON DANCE OF THE MANDANS, aquatint; courtesy Kennedy Galleries.







Above: **George Catlin:** BUFFALO CHASE IN THE SNOW DRIFTS—THE OJIBBEWAY INDIANS PURSUING THE HERDS ON SNOW SHOES, oil on Bristol board, from Catlin's *Indian cartoons*, North America: Indian Manners and Customs. [Editor's Note: This work will be included in the exhibition "George Catlin: A Collection of Indian Paintings," presented by the Kennedy Galleries from October 16 to 31 under the auspices of the Women's Committee of the American Museum of Natural History in New York.]

faith, with a touch of horror too. They mock the burden of his sociology by their commitment to formal visions wherein he sensed, and portrayed with improving subtlety, the inner logic of serried wigwams pacing the conical hills, the parabolic tension in a line of prairie fire advancing toward a river's curving margin and the harmony of a green-cast sky above a snow-field where despondently umber buffaloes are trapped by scarlet-crested Indians. Like Audubon in a single respect, he found art in the pursuit of something else. Twenty years after his Missouri adventure, he was still in pursuit, on a landscape crowded with figures as exotic. And it wasn't Indian welfare he was hunting. It was flamingoes.

If Catlin was the first systematic illustrator of Indian tribes—and this cold definition will dog his spirit forever—the distinction of first painting them with seriously trained skill belongs to Charles (or Carl) Bodmer, a Swiss artist trained in Paris who accompanied a German prince, Maximilian of Wied-Neuwied up the Missouri and as far west as what is now north-central Montana, where he also gathered first honors for painting the Far West.<sup>5</sup> The late Bernard De Voto over-

<sup>5</sup> Always excepting a Philadelphia Englishman, Samuel Seymour, little of whose handiwork is in circulation. Around 1819 he painted a *Distant View of the Rockies* (from Philadelphia, one guesses), a lovely vanilla fiction on a mile-high lawn, which can be seen in two shades, on the jacket and as frontispiece, in R. G. Cleland's *This Reckless Breed of Men* (Alfred A. Knopf, N. Y., 1950).

## PAINTINGS OF THE OLD WEST *continued*

whelmed his landscapes with superlatives—a touch of poetic justice: the paintings themselves are fairly overwhelming. Western American—Badlands Western—without a doubt, painted solidly and literal for the first time, they communicate the chilling majesty of scale characteristic of this terrain, remote from the usage of any but nomadic man, unrelated, as Henry James was to say in another context, “to any merciful modifying terms of the great social proposition.” The frigid coloring (I judge from reproductions) may have been due to Bodmer’s failure—a common one thereafter—to translate the elusive blanched quality of plateau-country light. Aquatint was Bodmer’s finer medium, where his command of the invincibly topographic was less oppressive. The paintings seem vulgar today; they suggest calendar iconography. In 1834, most men had never seen such country as Bodmer was painting; they would have had no quarrel with his calcifying treatment. Yet much of the cold density of the landscapes must have been native to Bodmer, himself, for his Indians are as impenetrable. *The Buffalo Dance* and the *Assiniboine Attack* may very well be correctly *reconceived*; they take place on paper, and the background figures are stilted extras, uninvolved. With assurance from experts, grant his figure portraits accuracy—of costume, face paint, gear and tackle, muscle interplay. They don’t breathe, for Bodmer was unable to place figures—it’s true of his horses and buffaloes, as well—in touch with their setting. He painted them, with extraordinary force, as specimens. The *Mandan Hut Interior* has been certified by archivists. Good—it isn’t a painting, it’s an exhibit in the South Wing; there’s nobody home. It recalls a forlorn notation from Thurber: “The one in the middle is stuffed—poor fellow . . .” Perhaps Bodmer really painted Indians from a deep revulsion. No matter from what tribe, they are unmitigatedly *savage*. We may wonder if Bodmer, who became a Barbizon painter, ever suffered any private dissatisfaction with his contribution to Prince Maximilian’s treatise on “*das innere Nord-Amerika*.” Those superbly drafted Indian figures and the desolate igneous boulders co-ordinated by diagonal walls of buffalo were important footnotes to the ethnology and geology of the American West. They were evidence, in addition, that the “interior” North America was precisely what Bodmer had missed.

These conjectures will not sound far-fetched if Bodmer is studied in the company of Alfred Jacob Miller<sup>6</sup> who was also in pursuit of pictorial information, three years later, 1837, traveling the same general route in the service of a patron. He penetrated the Far West beyond the territory reached by Catlin and Bodmer—in more ways than one. The West *breathes* in the sketches and watercolors of Miller, the light breaks up and the sky is atmosphere, not a wall. Landscape, as such, was not Miller’s subject. Movement within it was. He was staff artist, so to speak, for Captain Drummond Stewart, doughty ex-soldier and heir—as it turned out—to Birnam Wood (!), who wanted his hunting expedition through the Rockies to be memorialized on the walls of his Scottish castle. And this meant the buffalo hunt, the trappers’ rendezvous (never before sketched), night crossings and sunrise hitchings, antelope moving like cloud shadows—and, of course, Indians. It meant movement. For this exacting requirement, Miller’s talent was essentially fitted. Working swiftly, with pencil or pen and a wash, movement—the interfused sense of it—was what Miller captured, better than anything else, better than anyone who

got within sight of the same opportunity. With a sometimes slapdash economy of line he caught the exact cant of a man in the saddle anticipating a lurch. He had a kinetic feeling for the Plains Indian body rhythm (*he* could have made Blake-lock’s Indians dance) and when in his best form an equally sure sense for the flow of an Indian horse. Unimpressed by vertical masses, he expressed the vast by leaving his backgrounds sketchy, not so apparent in some of the worked-over watercolors, where mountains and trees take on a palpable Beaux-Arts finish. Distance, in his panoramic views of the Platte and the Green rivers, is softly indeterminate. His grass bends with the wind, smoke and shadows are differentiated, wafted campfires show degrees of density—his nights have sounds.

He wasn’t infallible. Taut composition eluded him when it wasn’t implicit in an observed activity, such as the quartering of a buffalo or the lassoing of a broomtail. He had copied in the Louvre and admired Delacroix. When he remembered the heroic grouping, land and figures separated, the loving fluidity of man and beast with light and woodsmoke and stream foliage fell away; forms bristled in false relief. But he was better than he knew, this Miller of Baltimore, and he never found out. He might have become another Antoine Gros, a master of the lyrical horse, if the right someone had encouraged him. Instead he elaborated his fine casual bivouacs, councils of war and swift pursuits, for the walls of Murthly Castle, and lived out his years as a studio painter in Baltimore. In all the documentary illustration of the West from his day to those of Remington’s literal facilities, there is no one to put beside him. He defined the real sentient thing which the others missed: the poetry and the ache in the Western rendezvous with the ephemeral—the mindless appeal of sunrise on a wilderness when the rippling drift of things seems eternal and consequences are ghosts beyond the endless clearing.

After Miller, at the level where art was consciously employed, the canvas became a stage-set or a diorama on which a gesture of the frontier was *arranged* under focused lights, or *dramatized*. Bodmer’s landscapes, prophetic of this tendency, were committed in the spirit of science; those of Thomas Hill, Bierstadt and Moran in the spirit of opera. The terminus of the new Overland Trail was no longer Oregon but Turner. Then, as the Shining Mountains were revealed as mere obstacles in the path of commerce, they disintegrated on canvas into a welter of effects—amorphous Indians desecrated faintly at bottom left of the scene, doomed in a murk of ravines and clouds. George De Forest Brush replaced the white horses of the Encounters with white birds and revived a three-dimensional Indian—yearning in alabaster. During the nineties he gave up Indians completely for Madonnas. The fate of the High Style was never more trenchantly enacted, however, than by Frederick Church, a considerably talented disciple of Thomas Cole. Church carried the horticultural turbulence of his master to the altitudes of the West. Discovering that the Rockies weren’t big enough for him he removed to the Andes, where moonshafts fall from greater heights, and finally to Labrador where he glutted his hunger for the Ultimate Landscape on icebergs . . . Blakelock went mad—and the Western movie was born.

SO MUCH thunder and vapor; so few redemptions of the formless actual . . . The pathos of desire remains. In a comparative handful of pictures, the theme of the unattainable or the vanishing is kept durable by craft. The buffaloes of the Mandan flee across the emerald cones of Catlin’s toy world, while their correct delineator ambushes the protean dream on another frontier. Hunters meeting flatboatmen with Flemish decorum beneath a stream-cut bank lend momentary social color to the wild auburn solitude of Beard’s “unknown” Western river. Vitalized by smudges of watercolor and a deft pen, Crow Indians picket their broomtails among the willows, alert to thieving Blackfeet. And Captain Stewart’s caravan, heading for “the coasts of the Nebraska,” rocks across a light-distempred plain—into a mirage.

<sup>6</sup> The contrast, in part, has been made conveniently available by many reproductions in Bernard De Voto’s *Across the Wide Missouri* (Houghton Mifflin, 1947). Much of the Miller material was here reproduced for the first time. Subsequently, the watercolors made from the original sketches were published in *The West of Alfred Jacob Miller*, edited by Marvin Ross, from notes and watercolors in Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. De Voto included two Catlins to point up the superiority of Bodmer and Miller, but Catlin’s merits lie elsewhere, as I have protested, and they are richly visible in two color plates published in McCracken, *op. cit.*

## PRELUDE: THE 1930'S

*A decade of social crisis and wide public interest in the arts marks the beginning of the period in which we now find ourselves.*

BY SIDNEY GEIST

**I**DEALLY a decade of art history ought to be bracketed by a great work of art at one end and by a comparable work at the other, or by a revelatory exhibition and the death of a master, or by any two specifically artistic phenomena. And, indeed, as art plays an ever greater part on the surface of American life, as leisure time increases and the traditional pastimes lose their flavor, it is just possible to imagine future periods of time, political as well as artistic, being marked off by paintings, or say, the raising of a sculpture being considered as important as the launching of a submarine. But such fantasizing only makes clear the degree to which the arts in the United States in the thirties developed not according to any internal artistic logic, but rather in response to the pressure of events in the political realm. So general a statement applies, of course, to the arts considered statistically, as a mass activity; for the non-statistical, personal work of art—and it existed in the thirties—refuses to be fashioned by events; it bursts out of any neat bundle of time, and dates, rather than is dated by, the moment of its appearance.

The 1930's was the decade of the Spanish Civil War, the Moscow trials and the rise of Hitler and Mussolini, but the

two signal and staggering events which separate the arts of the thirties from those of the twenties and the forties, forming a tight political parenthesis, are the Stock Market crash of October 29, 1929, and the opening of World War II on September 1, 1939.

The Crash and the subsequent bank failures—over one thousand in 1930—threw six million men out of work by the end of that year. The Depression had begun. And it had an immediate and disastrous effect on the life of the artist. The successes of the Ash Can School and the art boom of the mid-twenties were suddenly relegated to a mythical past. Sales of art dropped sharply; many artists employed in industry lost their jobs. During the summer of 1930 the situation became crucial in Woodstock, an art colony and summer haven for New York painters. With banks closing on all sides, credit had been cut off in the local stores, and Woodstock artists without ready cash found themselves unable to get groceries. In what remains a memorable gesture in that time of crisis, Mrs. Juliana Force, director of the Whitney Studio Club, rushed to the scene, and bought paintings to a sum rumored to be twenty thousand dollars. It saved the day. But this act of munificence,

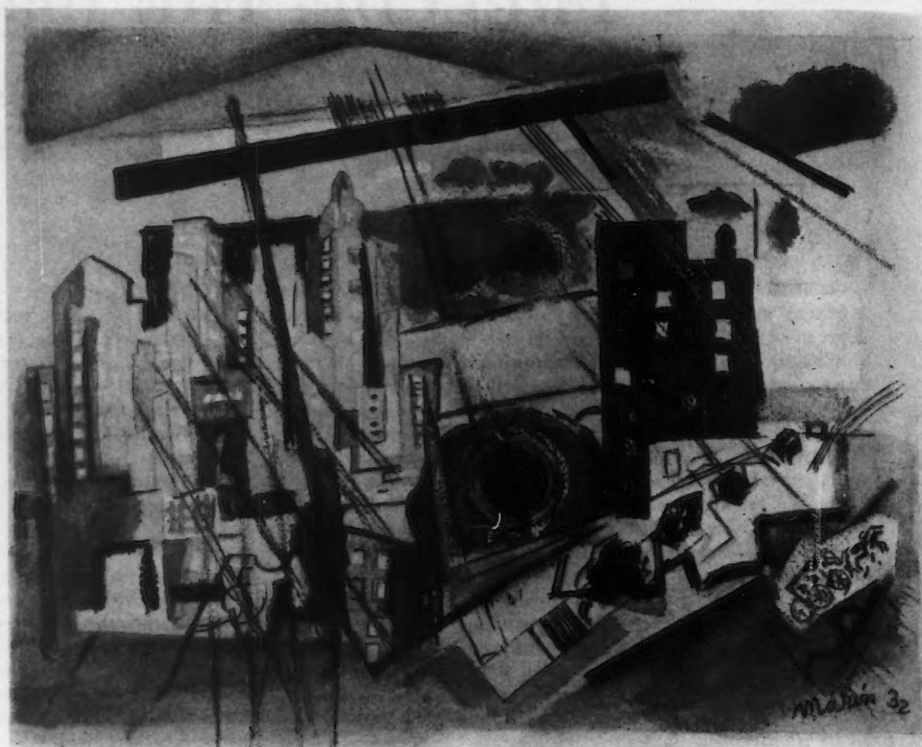
**Diego Rivera:** PORTRAIT OF DETROIT (1932). Detroit Institute of Arts.







Vincent Canadé: SELF-PORTRAIT (1937).



John Marin: REGION OF BROOKLYN BRIDGE FANTASY (1932). Whitney Museum.

## PRELUDE: THE 1930'S *continued*

typical of Mrs. Whitney and Mrs. Force, saved only the day. The artists' plight became worse as the national economy declined. Finally, with the election of Franklin Roosevelt in 1932, the government stepped in and inaugurated, among others, a program designed to keep artists working at their arts.

The Public Works of Art Project—the PWAP—, set up in December, 1933, proved to be only a temporary relief; its demise was dramatically foreshadowed one day in March, 1934, when a number of Project artists, who had been given studio space in the Whitney Museum, were surprised by cries of "We want jobs, we want jobs!" from a group of pickets, most of them art students and non-artists urged on by left-wing elements, marching and shouting in front of the building. Embarrassed by this unexpected turn and fearing violence, the Whitney Museum closed its doors for the season, six weeks earlier than usual. The PWAP lasted only seven months, to June, 1934, but it established a pattern that was followed later by other government agencies.

**I**N August, 1935, the Federal Art Project was set up by Harry Hopkins, administrator of the Works Project Administration—the WPA. This project absorbed numerous state projects and about a thousand artists of the original 3,500 on the PWAP. At the same time there were some 4,000 artists living on relief and possibly 2,000 others not on relief living on a mere marginal subsistence. By September, 1936, the government was the greatest patron of art in the world, with 5,300 artists on the payroll. Slightly less than half this number were in the fine arts; the rest were craftsmen or worked in commercial and applied arts.

That the Federal Art Project was more than an emergency economic measure is made clear by the bare statistical record. In the first six weeks of 1936 the project established nineteen art galleries in the South alone, which had a half-million visitors in that time. In its first year the Project completed 434 murals for public buildings and had 55 in progress and sketches

for many more. In New York City over 50,000 children and adults received weekly art instruction by Project teachers. The Project sponsored lectures on art and demonstrations of techniques; it was called upon to design countless posters and displays of all kinds. It would be difficult to estimate the number of easel paintings and sculptures which were given—"allocated" was the word—to institutions and buildings all over the country.

Besides filling a void in the national culture, the Federal Art Project accomplished a great work of preservation and research, not only in the arts known as "fine," but also in stained glass, mosaic, weaving, furniture design and the crafts of sculpture. In establishing the *Index of American Design*, the Project created a handsome and permanent record of our heritage of folk art, design and craft up to the end of the nineteenth century, in which one may study for the first time the pattern of a native tradition.

For the individual artist the Project was not only literally a life-saver, but, in many cases, a world of new opportunity. Required to work ninety-six hours a month for the Project, the artist had time to do some private work. Since materials for project work were supplied to him, he was able, in the middle and late thirties, to live decently on the weekly salary of \$23.86. As a result many artists found it possible to work and develop peacefully for the first time in their lives. To be sure, there was on the one hand a constant antagonism to the Project by Roosevelt's political opponents and by an unsympathetic portion of the population, and on the other hand the ever-present red tape, the lines to wait on, the many forms to fill out and new directives to study; but this was a small price to pay for the chance to work without financial harassment, and have one's work seen and used. A friend of Marsden Hartley recalls meeting him one day on a line of artists waiting for their paychecks. Tall, haughty, holding a silver-topped cane lightly between his thumb and first two fingers, Hartley said, "You know, this is the best thing that ever happened to me."

George C. Ault: HUDSON STREET (1932). Whitney Museum.

Lucile Blanche: AUGUST LANDSCAPE (1932). Whitney Museum.



The enthusiasm with which artists speak of their days on the Project attests to the strong emotion which those years generated. Moreover, there existed a new sense of relation to a public and a general and invigorating feeling of community among artists that differed radically from the traditional isolation of the American artist. An artist could feel himself to be not on the margin but in the midst of a society.

And with good reason. Besides the bustle of activity on the Project, the Treasury Art Department held competitions and gave outright commissions for the decoration of hundreds of public buildings. Post offices all over the nation acquired mural paintings and sculptured reliefs; large, free-standing sculpture was made for the exteriors of buildings. In 1939 Mitchell Siporin and Edward Millman were awarded a \$29,000 commission to do a mural painting for the St. Louis Post Office in the largest competition held by the U.S. Section of Fine Arts; scores of competitors were awarded smaller commissions. In the mid-thirties, Rockefeller Center was decorated by Lachaise, Noguchi, Sert, Zorach, Stuart Davis and Kuniyoshi, among others; it promised a widespread collaboration between artist and architect, which developments in later years belied. This was a time of great public art activity.

The education of the American public in the facts of art is also unparalleled in any other period of our history. Millions of Americans, to whom the fine arts were esoteric activities practiced in Europe some vague centuries before, were suddenly reading newspaper accounts of art activities in New York, San Francisco and New Orleans. It is certain that as a result of Project exhibitions, murals and allocations, whole regions of the country saw original paintings and sculpture for the first time. Incredible as it may seem now, one school superintendent wrote in to Project headquarters to say that "The art teachers in our schools have never had an opportunity to see an original work of art." One cannot doubt the truth of Holger Cahill's statement that the Federal Art Project "saved American art from a dark age." Allowed to run its course un-

hindered, the combination of the Depression and the national ignorance would have engendered a long-lasting cultural disaster.

ASIDE from the fact that the Project aroused this immense interest and kept American art alive—if only by keeping numbers of American artists alive—what of the actual works which it produced?

In the fall of 1936, the Museum of Modern Art held an exhibition of WPA art entitled "New Horizons in American Art," which included mural designs, painting, sculpture, graphic arts and children's art. Holger Cahill, National Director of the Federal Art Project, who wrote the introduction to the catalogue, stated that it was a principle of the Project's administration that it is "not the solitary genius, but a sound general movement which maintains art as a vital functioning part of any cultural scheme." Not to question the value of this point of view, a glance at the reproductions in the catalogue does not, certainly, reveal any solitary geniuses, but neither does it reveal a movement which appears either sound or general. American painting at this moment was, in fact, groping for a way out of a prevailing illustrationalism. In *New Horizons in American Art*, fantasy, Americana and social realism are sprinkled among the numerous landscapes which are successful principally in the hands of Woodstockers. In this widespread production of landscape Mr. Cahill was able, very generously, to distinguish a "poetry of the soil"; at this distance it looks more like a plain prose of the sod. Of sculpture the Project never produced great numbers; in this show there were only seventeen pieces, eight of which were by Patrocínio Barela, a young New Mexican woodcarver. (On view too was an amazing head, called *Miner*, by Mike Mosco, age fifteen.) Of the larger sections devoted to mural cartoons, designs, sketches and trial sections, *New Horizons in American Art* reproduced some dozen examples in a variety of modes ranging from a baggy-trousers Mexican style to one of children's book illus-

## PRELUDE: THE 1930'S *continued*

tration. It is an interesting comment on changing tastes that *not* reproduced in this catalogue were mural designs by James Brooks, Ilya Bolotowsky, Byron Browne, Stuart Davis, Balcomb Greene, Arshile Gorky, Willem de Kooning and George McNeil.

The fact is that, unlike the Federal Theatre Project which produced a director like Orson Welles and a new theatrical technique in "The Living Newspaper," the Federal Art Project did not give birth to either an important artist or an important body of work. It made it possible for mature artists to continue on their course and for young artists to develop their abilities, but it was not able to generate a new manner or movement, unless one excepts the heavy mural style which became typical. Arshile Gorky's Newark Airport mural, *Aviation*, and Stuart Davis' mural for Studio B of radio station WNYC were rare victories over this style, an amalgam of the mannerisms of Orozco, Rivera and Thomas Benton.

Among the artistic groupings of the period, the most vociferous was the school of "social-conscious" painting, dedicated to the class struggle under the twin banners of "Art is a Weapon" and "Art is Communication." To point out that the "communication" took place always in the title or in actual words within the painting or drawing, was to be accused of ivory-towerism. But the esthetic of social realism was as fruitless in the visual arts as it was in literature: it failed to produce a significant painting just as it failed to produce the long-hoped-for proletarian novel. The mystique of regionalism failed for comparable reasons. All across the country artists began to discover the local scene; landscape and genre painting were to be America's answer to Europe's modernism. With an esthetic that may be summarized as "To Hell with Europe—Paint American," this movement soon developed a snobbism that had uncomfortable political overtones. It seemed, after all, that some American painters were more American than other American painters, Kansas was more American than Long Island, and the past more American than the present.

In contrast to these larger and more widely known groups, the abstractionists of the thirties took on a militant, revolutionary character. Few in number, they were veritable *artistes maudits*, who, in the early days of the Project, were utilized as teachers, researchers and technicians—not as artists. It should be remembered that abstract art in the thirties in New York was generally an art abstracted from nature, and lacked the non-representational character of present-day abstract styles. These were actually the last years of a development that had been given impetus by the Armory Show of 1913 and that had persisted all through the twenties; it was thus the end of something, not a beginning. But as the thirties wore on, abstraction more and more shed its representational elements, and the end of the decade in fact marks the *avant-garde's* entry into the realm of totally non-objective forms, and inaugurates the period in which we still live.

ONE of the by-products of leftist thought in the thirties was an exaggerated consciousness of one's role in history. What this meant practically was that one was made to feel that he had to be of his time and create an art proper for the historical moment. The philosophical difficulties involved in this attitude were swept aside as the historical moment was determined, by the powerful Left, to be one of social revolution and as artists were exhorted to put their gifts at its service. Time has shown that two possibilities were open to those artists hellbent on being "of their time": either they became trapped in a moment of history—in social realism, in fact; or they found it expedient to go from style to style, always staying in fashion and, consequently, being permanently "of their time"—but nothing else.

Yet the thirties also had its artists dedicated to the service of neither political nor calendar time, but to that proliferation of forms in time which has the aspect of timelessness. Independent of schools or groups, they pursued (and many of them continue to pursue) their own courses on both sides of



At left: **Yasuo Kuniyoshi**, *CAFE* (1937). Whitney Museum. Above: **Morris Kantor**, *NUDE* (1934). Opposite page: **Gaston Lachaise**, sculpture for 45 Rockefeller Plaza.



the thirties with a dedication to internal artistic values that is a permanent example of seriousness and that has produced a whole series of significant works. Their number would include such artists as Marin, Burlin, Kuniyoshi, Avery, Bunn, Lachaise, Kantor, Hopper, Davis and Dove, among others.

Every meditation on the relation between time and art is inevitably accompanied by a certain nostalgia—why, one wonders, do we no longer see the cool, crisp works of George Ault, or the intense self-portraits of Vincent Canadé; why has it been necessary for a genre as charming as that of Eugenie Gershoy's satirical, sculptured portraits of artists to disappear? And at the same time, why was David Smith's first show of direct metal sculpture, in 1938, not recognized to be the event it was? Smith was of his and everyone else's time in 1938; he still is, and is sure to be for some time to come—a fact the official art world does not realize in spite of Smith's astonishing twenty-year-long production.

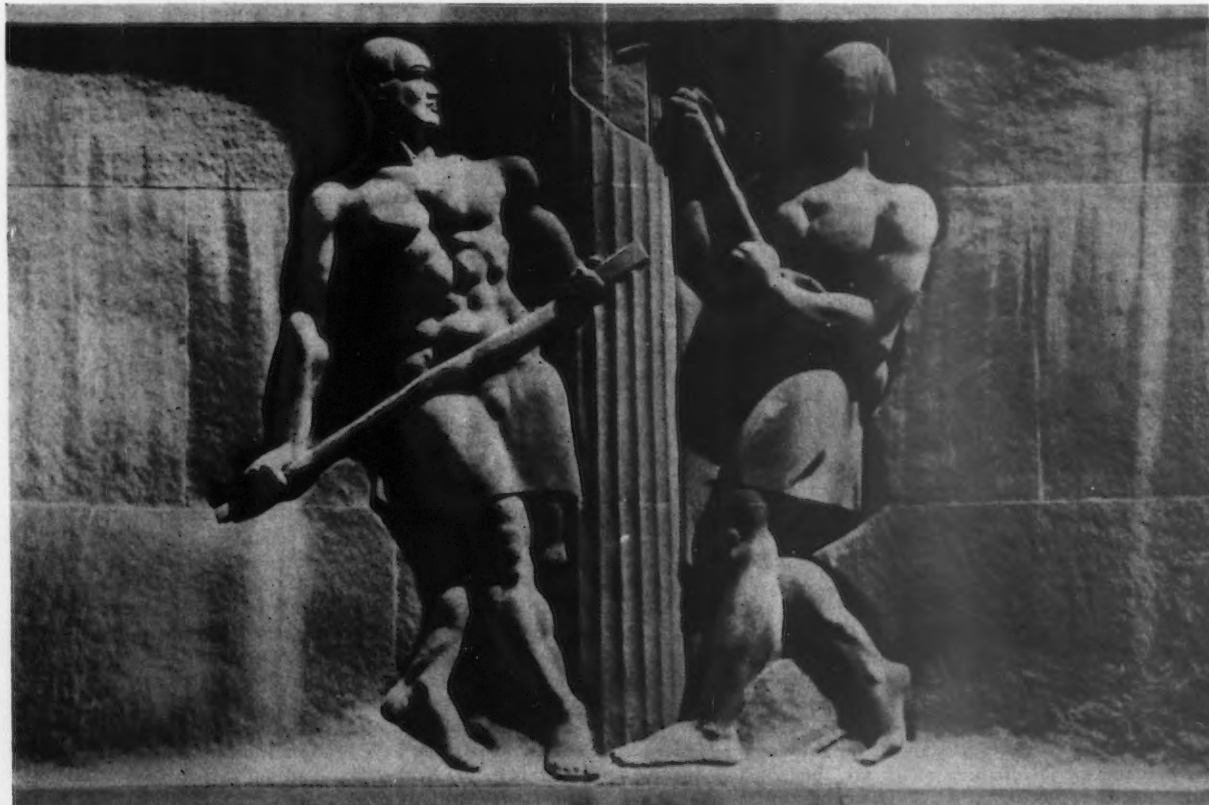
The truth is that in the late thirties and early forties, critics and both museum authorities and WPA officials were looking the other way. The latter, intent on their roles as tastemakers, returned from European tours with the observation, "Abstract art is dead." If Americans persisted in working in abstraction, that was because they were not really *au courant*. Only one American abstractionist, Alexander Calder, was able to achieve not only national but European attention in this period. Nevertheless, the abstractionists were the only group of the late thirties with a dynamic sufficient to perpetuate it beyond the war years.

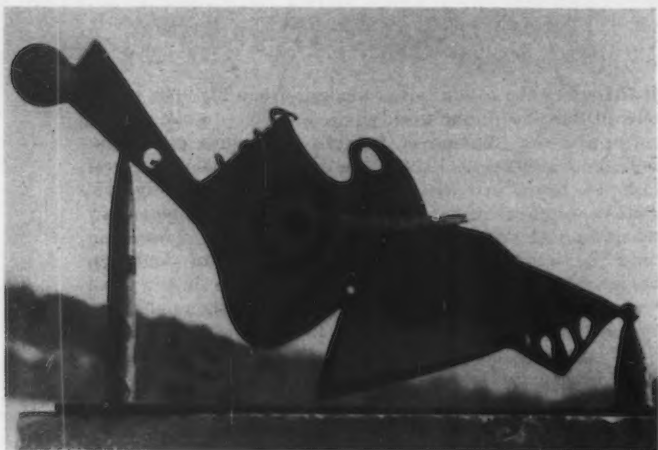
But if the thirties have taught us any lesson about time, it is that time for the artist is not what he sees it to be on the front page of a newspaper, but what he finds it to be within the realm of his own work. And in this realm of art itself, freed from the clamor of politics, the artist as well as the public suddenly found access to a new exhibition world; to institutions which, if they have overstressed their part in creating a vital artistic culture, are nonetheless indispensable to such a

vitality, given the conditions of modern urban life. The touchstone of this new public world of art was a new museum, in a new spirit: the Museum of Modern Art, which opened its doors on November 9, 1929, a few days after the Wall Street crash. Its broad activities, ranging from comprehensive exhibitions of the best modern European art to photography and industrial design, changed the entire public world in which art functioned. The Whitney Museum of American Art, established in November of 1931, was to justify itself chiefly by its two important yearly invitational shows of painting and of sculpture, drawings and watercolors. Among dealers, Alfred Stieglitz, who had been the earliest protagonist of modern European art in New York, was reduced to showing a small group of Americans he had long sponsored. Charles Brummer, on the other hand, presented the work of Brancusi, Gargallo, Derain, Zadkine, Lipchitz, Matisse, Laurens, Villon, Despiau, Maillol and others in a memorable series of one-man exhibitions which were models of elegant, tasteful showmanship. And Julian Levy brought surrealism to 57th Street—and incidentally, was the first to show the American artist Joseph Cornell. But it was the Museum of Modern Art above all, with its brilliant succession of shows and its deliberate methods for interesting the public, which set the historical tone, and spurred even the Metropolitan Museum to a reconsideration of its policies.

As the Museum broadened its program artists might complain that they had to walk through household wares in order to see paintings, but the lay public registered no such objections: they swallowed Matisse, machinery, multiple dwellings and the movies in the same gulp and with an ever-increasing appetite. In its first ten years the Museum of Modern Art not only educated both artists and the general public in the most advanced tendencies in modern art, it was also an influence in all fields of design and an arbiter of taste in the home. Not that the Modern has always seen the picture steadily or seen it whole: its espousal of American abstraction has been tardy

Photo: Hugh B. Johnston.





David Smith: UNTITLED SCULPTURE (1936).

Arshile Gorky: PAINTING (1936-37). Whitney Museum.



Opposite: Stuart Davis, MURAL FOR STUDIO B, WNYC (1939).

## PRELUDE: THE 1930'S *continued*

and precipitate, for example. The American Abstract Artists, organized in 1936, became bold enough in 1940 to picket the Museum, demanding recognition for native abstraction, a recognition that the Museum did not accord it until 1951.

IF ONE turns to the personalities who left their mark on American art in the thirties, it was not the Europeans—though several notable figures, including Matisse and Héliou, visited the U. S. in this period—but two Mexicans, José Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera, whose presence changed the scene. Both executed controversial murals in the U. S. between 1930 and 1933, and the latter precipitated what is probably the most sensational scandal in American art history.

Orozco had come to New York in 1929, become fascinated with the city and painted a set of vigorous canvases. He showed his work at the Delphic Studios in 1930 and at the Downtown Gallery two years later. But it was his reputation as a muralist in Mexico that won him a series of commissions in this country. The first was his "Prometeo" mural at Pomona College in Claremont, California, in 1930. This was followed in 1931 by the mural at the New School for Social Research in New York, an unusual collage of pictorial techniques which has the immediacy of effect of a newsreel. From 1932 to 1934 Orozco worked on his large fresco in the Dartmouth College Library in New Hampshire. Based on Mexican mythology, it was designed in a bold, angular, declamatory style which was one of the two styles that were to influence so powerfully the WPA murals painted by the hundreds in the years that followed.

The other style was that of Rivera, who crowded his wall with an arithmetical accumulation of detail frankly in the service of a leftist ideology. Rivera had painted a mural in the Stock Exchange in San Francisco late in 1930, but it was a year later, at his one-man art show at the Museum of Modern Art, that the special qualities of his art, thought and energy made themselves felt in the U. S. The exhibition, which con-

tained about 150 items, included seven movable frescoes, each six feet by eight feet, which were painted in the month and ten days between his occupation of a studio in the Heckscher Building and the opening of his exhibition in the same building. Four were copies of frescoes originally done in Mexico, but three were completely new, and one of these was destined to arouse the anger of many Americans among the thousands who saw it. Called *Frozen Assets*, it depicted a three-layered city: the upper layer showed a row of empty stone skyscrapers, below was a scene of a municipal boardinghouse in which men lay in rows like corpses in a morgue, and on the bottom was a closely guarded, underground bank vault. In 1932 Rivera painted a large mural, *Portrait of Detroit*, at the Detroit Institute of Arts, which, too, roused protests because of its caustic portrayal of factory workers. But these occasions were no more than preliminaries to the main event.

Matisse, Picasso and Rivera had been solicited to submit sketches for a mural in the main entrance of the RCA building in Radio City. Matisse had bowed out, saying that his way of working was not suited to the site; Picasso did not reply; and Rivera was finally engaged by Nelson Rockefeller in what is one of the most unlikely partnerships on record. Rivera contracted to do the 1,071-square-foot fresco for \$21,000, out of which sum he was to pay his assistants. With six artists hired in New York he began work in March, 1933. He had not submitted any sketches but had written a prospectus of his ideas in which his Communism was only too plain. It was nevertheless a shock to Mr. Rockefeller to discover, early in May when the fresco was almost completed, that Rivera had painted a head of Lenin into the mural that decorated this familial monument to American capitalism. When he wrote to Rivera asking that it be removed, Rivera answered that the head of Lenin had a symbolic value which he offered to balance by a head of Lincoln. The logic of this plan escaped Mr. Rockefeller, and on May 9 Rivera and his assistants were ordered to stop working. Rivera was not per-

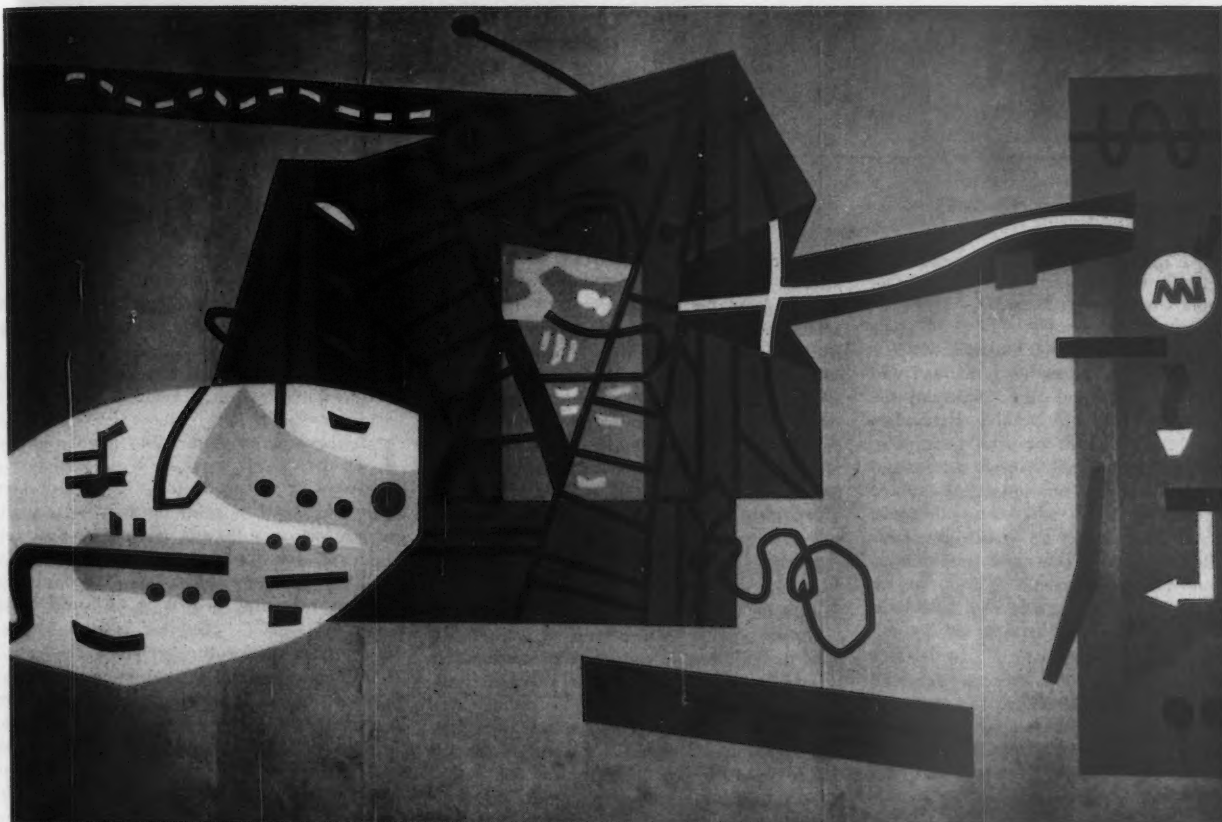


Photo: Museum of Modern Art.

mitted to take photographs (although one of his assistants took some from a balcony with a Leica concealed in her blouse), the scaffolding was removed and the fresco was covered with large frames stretched with canvas. Protesting pickets and mounted police completed the scandal. The affair caused a storm to break in artistic circles; emotion ran high and many an old friendship was broken in the taking of sides that followed. The Rockefellers promised that "the uncompleted fresco of Diego Rivera will not be destroyed, or in any way mutilated but . . . will be covered to remain hidden for an indefinite time." Rivera's commission to do a mural for the General Motors Building at the Chicago World's Fair was withdrawn on May 12 although he had already prepared the sketches. In a series of protests and statements, Rivera was supported by a most distinguished list of artists and public figures, and Elie Faure, the French critic, wrote a letter\* to Rivera in which he said, "The artistic glory of a Matisse or even of a Picasso does not count alongside of the *human* passions which you arouse, and there is not at this hour in the world's course another painter who can say as much . . ." Rivera, in his typically dramatic and unpredictable manner, used what was left of his "Rockefeller money" to paint a mural in the New Workers School on Fourteenth Street.

On the night of February 9, 1934, the fresco in the RCA building was destroyed and Rivera's career in the U. S. was over. The scandal, however, had political and artistic effects which reverberated throughout the rest of the decade. The Communist cause achieved an unprecedented publicity: Rivera's work became the rallying point for wavering attitudes; leftist artists discovered a vocabulary of expression. The Rivera case dramatized the question of mural decoration, socially, esthetically and technically, and stimulated the extensive exploration of mural art by the Federal Art Project in the following years.

The destruction of the Rivera fresco precipitated one final

public controversy. It had taken place just nineteen days before the opening of an exhibition in the RCA Building which was to be one of the largest art shows in New York City history, and in protest many artists, including Orozco and Lachaise, refused to exhibit. The show itself, called "The First Municipal Art Exhibition" and publicized as "a mile of American art," had over nine hundred works by 412 painters, sculptors and printmakers, including examples from all schools and styles in an easy spirit of free-for-all that was typical of the thirties. At the World's Fair at Mineola, Long Island, in 1939, some 1,200 contemporary American works were shown in a manifestation animated by the same spirit. Nothing comparable to these two exhibitions has occurred here since.

The event which was to open an era in art distinct from that of the thirties was the arrival in the U. S., in a short space of time starting late in 1939, of a score of major European artists in flight from Hitler. If their coming here was the effect of causes in the political realm, it set off in its own turn a series of effects in the artistic realm. Tanguy, Ozenfant and Seligmann came in 1939; in 1940, Mondrian and Léger; in 1941, Lipchitz, Masson, Ernst and Chagall; in 1942, Zadkine, Duchamp and the poet André Breton; in 1943, Héliou; and later, Matta, Albers, Miró, Beckmann, Arp and Dubuffet. The presence of this brilliant constellation in and around New York provided an unequaled stimulus, especially to a group of artists who were in personal contact with them. Their personalities, ideas and works combined to have an effect that was both inspiring and liberating. Once this happened the thirties, and the pioneer work of Hofmann and Moholy-Nagy, were thrown into new perspective as a period whose confusions, struggles and gropings were a prelude to the period we are now witnessing. If the *avant-garde* found its way out of the thirties by attaching itself to European art, the results of this union were to be so vigorous that it would appear eventually as though Europe would have to look to America for new impulses of any vitality. At any rate, American art from this moment on was to shed its provincialism and become part of the international stream.

\*Quoted in *Diego Rivera*, by Bertram D. Wolfe, Alfred A. Knopf, 1939.



# BOOKS

**Four Steps toward Modern Art** by Lionello Venturi. Bampton Lectures in America, Number 8. Columbia University Press. \$3.00.

LIONELLO Venturi is one of the relatively few authoritative art critics of our time, and the combination of taste and scholarship he brings to bear makes him edifying even when he repeats himself. Much of what he says in this present little book he has said before, and sometimes better, yet I find myself stimulated anew. I do not always agree with Professor Venturi, and I often wish he would pursue his insights further than he does, and work out his observations more connectedly and in greater detail, but I would still rather read him than almost any other writer on art now alive.

The book at hand, composed of four lectures given last year at Columbia, reflects Venturi's characteristic, if seldom explicitly stated, assumption that every manifestation in art must be approached as part of a historical continuum extending through the present. Each work of art is, of course, an entity whose purpose is contained in itself, and needs neither history nor society to justify it; but to account for it—to the small extent that a work of art of any importance can be accounted for—we have to keep before us its relations with other works. It is possible that Professor Venturi overemphasizes the continuity of our Western art, but if so, it is a welcome corrective to the opposite and far more prevalent tendency to treat modern art as an utter historical novelty.

Everything of significance in the art of the past, if we confine that past to our own Western tradition, can be seen as leading toward the modern in one way or another. Why start then with Giorgione, the appearance of whose art is less modern than that of Piero della Francesca's, which is in turn less modern than that of many a Byzantine mosaic and fresco? And why make Caravaggio the next step? His final manner is even less modern in appearance than Giorgione's art. But Professor Venturi's point has little to do with *appearance*, notwithstanding the fact that it is by that alone that works of art have virtuality as art.

A Byzantine mural, no matter how much its appearance may remind us of high impressionism, does not "feel" as modern as Giorgione because it conveys a certain kind of anecdotal meaning in a certain way. It is Giorgione's attitude that brings him closer to ourselves. Giorgione is the first artist in our tradition, says Venturi, to conceive art on the "musical level" and as "no longer directed toward stress upon knowledge"—which it was in the hands of the Florentines—but following the "senses and imagination." "Venetian painting opened the horizons of a new realism, broader than that of the Renaissance because no longer limited to man. Man was no longer abstract from, but immersed in, reality, and nature became humanized, not because it was subdued but because it was adored by man."

There is less that we already know, or has already been said by others, in Professor Venturi's lecture on Caravaggio. It is the latter's abstractness, the seeds of which came from mannerism, as well as his psychological expressiveness, that is held to lead toward the modern. Because Caravaggio's "abstract forms had such an intensity of feeling, such an evidence of truth, they were considered reality itself." "Besides volumes, geometric lines, and effects of light and shade, Caravaggio brought into art a new longing for truth which gave a dramatic aspect to his life as well as to his art."

The lecture on Manet is the best in the book. Professor Venturi says: "...suppose that the painter be subjective in the sense that he only organizes the impressions received from reality and thereby creates impressions coherent in themselves without modification through checking them either against reality or against ideal beauty. What would be the result? The expression of a way of seeing, of a pure vision, of a plastic-chromatic whole, of form for form's sake . . . this is the breaking point, forced by Manet, which resulted in the birth of modern art." With Cézanne the "autonomy of art in the face of nature became more complete than that of the impressionists, became a new world, a world of imagination which was developing along a line parallel to that of nature, meeting it only in the infinite." This is true, but too simple to be left at that, which is where Professor Venturi does leave it more or less. The compulsion Cézanne felt, to a greater degree than did Manet, to "check against nature" made the autonomy of his art a more difficult and also a more ambiguous one. One feels Venturi's somewhat chronic short-windedness here, his reluctance to explain himself in depth when contradictions have to be wrestled with. And then there is his conception of modern art itself.

According to Professor Venturi, the "fundamental exigency" of cubism, which took its departure from Cézanne, was "to interpret reality by abstract geometrical forms. . ." Abstract geometrical forms may have played a great part in the development of cubism, but they are by no means one of its essential features; rather they are a mere by-product of Picasso's and Braque's original effort to model three-dimensional form more firmly by simplifying the shapes of objects and of their constituent planes. The forms remain simplified throughout, but in synthetic cubism they are no longer "geometrical."

One might find other things to argue with in this little book, especially in the chapter on Cézanne, but the principal thing is the level Professor Venturi asserts and maintains, and for that one cannot be grateful enough. There is surprisingly little art writing in our time that is informed by genuine philosophical and historical sophistication coupled with truly "professional" taste.

CLEMENT GREENBERG

**El Greco** by Paul Guinard. Skira. \$5.75.

**Goya: The Disasters of War.** Essays by Xavier de Salas and Elie Faure. Anchor Books. \$1.25.

**In Search of Spanish Painting** by R. Scott Stevenson. Philosophical Library. \$6.00.

POSSIBLY the most laudable quality of Paul Guinard is his humility in the approach to El Greco, or rather, to the El Greco problem. After fifty years of solid research by outstanding scholars we still know not a great deal more about the artist than was known to the first modern biographer, Manuel B. Cossio. "It has proved no more rewarding to look to El Greco for the 'secret of Toledo,'" Guinard asserts, "than to look to Toledo for the 'secret of El Greco,'" thus disapproving of "hypotheses, however clever or tempting." All that has been established concerning the life and work of this enigmatic man, Domenikos Theotokopoulos, is gathered together here in a readable and richly illustrated volume. So little information on the first half of his life has been uncovered that Guinard, in the first chapter, "From Crete to Toledo," adequately covers it on no more than three pages. To the Spaniards El Greco remained an eccentric foreigner, yet he enjoyed the friendship of some outstanding men and did not suffer from the xenophobia that seems to be an achievement of our century. His style of painting, which scandalized not only the classical-minded eighteenth century, but even the author of the biographical sketch for the 1911 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, was quite acceptable to his contemporaries.

Guinard shares neither the "annexationism" of Cossio for whom El Greco was the incarnation of the Spanish genius, nor August L. Mayer's opposite view that this Oriental was artistically a total and rootless stranger in Toledo. Just as he permitted himself to be influenced by Byzantine and Italian Renaissance art, so he adapted himself to the laws to which Spanish altarpieces conformed. Nonetheless, he never developed into a truly Spanish painter: "There is a wide gulf indeed between the native Spanish feeling for the concrete and matter-of-fact and El Greco's irrepressible soaring into poetic unreality . . ." Likewise, the parallels drawn between certain sayings of Santa Teresa and certain paintings by El Greco are "extremely farfetched." Praiseworthy also is Guinard's refusal to call him a baroque painter; El Greco was a mannerist, if the only one "capable of putting exhaustive investigation of form to the service of new expressive values."

The layman will find in this book several features that will add to his understanding and enjoyment of the phenomenon El Greco: translations of sonnets by Gongora and Paravicino written in memory of their friend; letters and other documentary material from contemporary sources; and short biographies of El Greco's patrons and friends. The pictures are carefully chosen to avoid those that have not been unas-

sailably authenticated. With the exception of two early, rather Byzantine panels (*Coronation of a Saint or King and Mount Sinai*), they are all widely known, having been frequently reproduced in color. Inevitably, a large picture, like *The Burial of Count Orgaz*, or *The Dream of Philip II*, with many figures and innumerable nuances, does not come out well in a reproduction barely larger than the palm of a hand; fortunately, details of nearly all of the works are given. From American collections come many of the reproduced paintings, among them the *Laocoön*, of the National Gallery, shown here for the first time in color after a recent cleaning (the restoration removed the loincloths which prudishness had dictated, and also revealed an additional figure).

Théophile Gautier spoke of El Greco as a "madman of genius." Similar terms must have been applied to Goya, who has also often been proclaimed the father of modern art. In the aquatint etchings now known as *The Disasters of War* there is enough to shock even those who have experienced the terror of totalitarian systems, more powerful and more vicious than the brutal regime of Napoleon's army in Spain. There is nothing to alleviate the stark tragedy—no impressive show of marching troops, no exciting battles, only rape, torture and murder.

The book contains two introductory essays, one on Goya's life and work by Xavier de Salas, director of the Institute of Spain in London, and one on the etchings themselves by the late Elie Faure (the publishers fail to state that the same essay by Faure appeared in an Oxford University Press edition of *The Disasters* two decades ago). Inevitably there is duplication, and at times a conflict; for instance, De Salas quotes an authority to the effect that the series was engraved from 1810 to 1820, whereas Faure maintains that *The Disasters* must have been engraved about 1820. (According to the 1955 catalogue of the Goya Exhibition that was circulated by the Smithsonian Institution, the plates were executed between 1810 and 1812, except for one referring to the defeat of Napoleon, which must have been made in 1813 or 1814.)

De Salas believes that Goya designed this series "not as a denunciation of the horrors of war in general . . . but rather to give a first-hand account of the sufferings of his fellow-countrymen and to make an indictment of the Napoleonic troops." Faure does not disagree, but he also draws our attention to the sadism prevailing: "He [Goya] enjoys the spectacle of rape . . . his righteous anger is mingled with and perhaps augmented by sensuality . . . he was fascinated by the lowest but also most disturbing things . . ." Incidentally, nearly all of the etchings from Plate 65 onward are political and religious satires or fantasies, related to the *Caprichos*, yet with no clear references to the Napoleonic War.

The complete series was not made public until thirty-five years after the artist's death, and has, since 1863, enthralled tens of thousands for a variety of reasons, among which the artistic ones are not the least. To be sure, this inexpensive new edition can be warmly welcomed, and it deserves the widest circulation. Still, there are shortcomings about which the critic cannot be silent. Nowhere is there any indication as to what edition of the etchings was used to make

the plates. Many of the pictures have been cropped badly so as to throw off the balance of the total picture and make it appear cramped (there are no expendable spaces in a master's work). Finally, the Spanish titles written or at least suggested by Goya himself often are inaccurately spelled in the List of Etchings at the end of the book.

*In Search of Spanish Painting* is an absolutely useless volume. The author, a retired British medical man, is truly an enthusiast who traveled from land to land, from city to city, to view the great works of Spanish art, but he gives little more than pedestrian statements on individual works and masters, having derived all information from plowing uncritically through an enormous number of art histories, biographies and guidebooks. Alas, there is no personal point of view, no attempt at freely and freshly evaluating what has been seen. Long stretches of dry and not necessarily authoritative information are "relieved" by naïve recollections of trivial talk the author had with colleagues, art collectors, museum directors, guides, and even one "real" princess!

ALFRED WERNER

**The Art and Architecture of China** by Laurence Sickman and Alexander Soper. The Pelican History of Art. Penguin Books. \$8.50.

THE best of all possible reviews of a book is the injunction, "Go and buy it." For the better part of my life I have regretted not buying the *Propyläen Kunstgeschichte* in the days of its issue. My advice is to buy the Pelican History of Art, now, volume by volume, before the mass of some forty eventual volumes is beyond your budget. There have been eight volumes so far, and there are to be three more this year. There has not been an unsatisfactory one to date.

The general editors have been especially happy in their choice of editors for the Oriental volumes. India, the Ancient Orient, Japan have all been models of comprehensive and compressed exposition, with not only critical insight but, something far more rare in a compendium, sensibility. This China volume has all the virtues of its predecessors. Laurence Sickman, director of the Nelson Gallery at Kansas City, is the custodian of one of the four or five greatest Far Eastern collections in the Western World. He is much more, though, than a museologist. The chapters on early Chinese painting, on the Ch'an (Zen) Buddhist painters, on the bamboo painters have the same deep personal responsiveness which still makes Fenolossa and Binyon absorbing reading in spite of the doubtfulness of some of their information. Of course an additional virtue of Mr. Sickman's exposition is that it is thoroughly up to date, archeologically, historically, critically. This is important, because the last twenty years have witnessed tremendous strides in Sinology and the study of all aspects of Eastern culture. For instance, the first plate reproducing a painting is from a second-century Han dynasty tomb at Liao-Yang, which, to the best of my knowledge, has never been reproduced before in a popular book.

One of the felicities of the book is the reproduction of a considerable number of works of

art from the National Museum in Peking. Editors of books on Chinese art have a bad habit of reproducing only the most convenient plates. This gives the impression that the art of China is confined to the British Museum, the Musée Guimet, and the Boston, Freer, and Nelson Galleries, which is very far from being the case. The greatest Chinese art is still in China. Most of the old familiar pieces so often reproduced are here too. Of course without them the book would not be complete.

Certain things I miss: an example of Su Tung Po's bamboo painting; some examples of the greatest calligraphy; the Ma Yuan fan-shaped landscape in Boston. Mi Fei, one of the world's great eccentric painters, is represented by a small, poor reproduction. There could be many more Shang bronzes, too. I don't really know where these will find a home in the series otherwise, and they are certainly amongst the most noble thoughts ever molded in the mind of man.

However, there are so many new things to compensate for those I miss. Besides, like all the Pelican Series, this is not just a picture book, but, as I said before, a thoroughly satisfactory historical and critical exposition of Chinese art.

Part II, eighty-three pages on architecture by Alexander Soper, suffers, in my opinion, from the same fault as his section on architecture in the Japanese volume. What we want to know about Far Eastern architecture is houses—domestic construction. It is not very likely that we are ever going to assimilate much of the temple and palace architecture of the Far East. But Frank Lloyd Wright and many others have shown us the great possibilities of adaptation of elements of Far Eastern domestic architecture. English-speaking architects are not likely to be called upon to build very many pagodas. A good many customers who have seen Japanese homes want something like them translated into Western terms. There is less knowledge of the Chinese house in the West and little influence. However, the home of the artist Morris Graves, which he built for himself, is essentially Chinese in inspiration and is certainly one of the most beautiful dwellings I have ever seen.

There is nothing wrong with Mr. Soper's history of Chinese architecture, except that it deals with monumental buildings which none of us is ever likely to borrow anything from, and which—unless the international situation changes—few of us are even likely to see. This gives the whole section on architecture something of an air of unreality.

I think the contemporary artist aware of the impasse into which he has got himself—the dilemma of the abstract expressionist—would do well to saturate himself with the art of the Far East. Let him try to see all the major Western collections—the three best are in America. Let him buy all the books he can—not just this one—and ponder them often and deeply. The unanswered questions which decorate the walls of the Carnegie and the Annuals of the major cities and trouble everybody, their producers most of all—these questions have all been answered long ago in China and Japan—comprehensive answers, elegant and succinct, whose greatest virtue is that they are never final.

KENNETH REXROTH



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style



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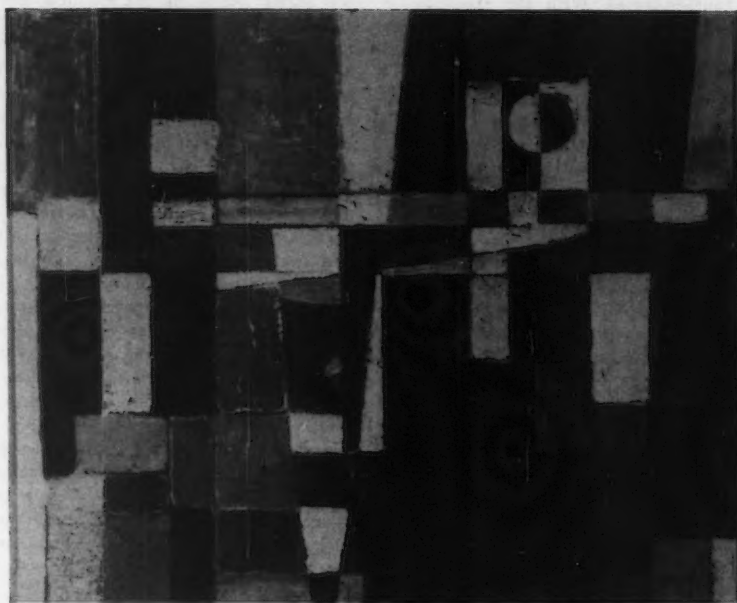
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## IN THE GALLERIES



**Michael Lowe:** STILL LIFE. Philadelphia Museum of Art. With an exhibition entitled "Reunion on Lexington Avenue," the Artists' Gallery is celebrating its twentieth anniversary as a non-profit organization dedicated to the introduction of new talent. The show, including painting and sculpture from twenty-five of the country's leading museums, will feature the work of artists whom the gallery has sponsored during its twenty-year career. In addition to Lowe, artists whose work will be on view include Joseph Albers, Ben Benn, Ben-Zion, Theodore Roszak, Nicolai Vassilieff and John Von Wicht. (Artists' Gallery, Sept. 18-Oct. 11.)

**Contemporary Watercolor in the United States:** After an extensive tour of French museums under the auspices of the French and American governments, this exhibition of watercolors by contemporary American artists is being shown for an extended period in New York. Ranging from the representational style of Morris Blackburn to the *avant-garde* productions of Baziotes and Hofmann, the show, organized by Doris Meltzer, toured museums at Toulouse, Bordeaux, Dijon and Besançon, receiving plaudits as "audacious" and "high-spirited." Representative works by Milton Avery, Arthur Osver, Ben-Zion, Robert Motherwell and Reginald Marsh are among the more notable works currently on view. (Meltzer, June 19-Oct. 1.)—J.R.M.

**Modern Canadian Painters:** The directions of modern painting in Canada are represented in this exchange exhibition with the gallery L'Actuel in Montreal. Lajoie and Corbeil, whose *Les Interrogations bleues* is one of the notable examples, exhibit in that technique of thickly surfaced painting conscientiously ordered by the palette knife. Patterson Ewen, whose work, shown here last spring, seemed to suffer from a transitional looseness, clinches his new style with a tighter structure and a richer complexity in his areas of color. The neo-plastic movement is represented by the meticulous statements of Toupin and Leduc, while Blair demonstrates an exuberant freedom in his bright and dripping swatches of color against white grounds. Tounsignant's bold *Arbre noir*, a composition of blunt red, yellow and black shapes, and Comtois's more whimsical *Après-midi d'une chenille* are rewarding, as well as work by Mousseau and Molinari. (Parma, Sept. 14-29.)—J.R.M.

**Brooklyn Museum Alumni:** Among the prize-winning works in this exhibition of alumni from the Brooklyn Museum Art School, James F. Juthstrom's *Green Field*, a richly surfaced abstraction in greens and dull browns, is particularly notable. An extensive show, including paintings, sculpture and ceramics, it has added this year, besides the regular entries, a number of invited artists, among them Pat Adams, Edmond Casarella, Robert Conover, Vincent Longo and Angelo Ippolito. Among the paintings, which represent the largest and most impressive

section of the exhibition, one notes a fine variety and vigor. Mark Samenfeld's *Landscape*, its blue arcs and daubs defining a territory of opalescent pinkish yellows, and Louis Finkelstein's *Halcyon Shore*, in luminous reds, blues and purples, are especially commendable. (Brooklyn Museum, Sept. 5-23.)—J.R.M.

**Edwin Earle Lewis:** A West Coast artist, Lewis exhibits here for the first time. His vigorous and complicated abstractions in oil display a fine sense of color, as in *Catch as Catch Can*, with its rich browns and oranges. His higher-keyed compositions, as in *The Embrace*, with its yellows, whites and soft blues, tend toward a more simplified manner, the painting brought close to the surface and with a noteworthy linear elegance. (Wellons, Sept. 10-22.)—J.R.M.

**Don Judd and Nathan Raisen:** Though it bears some resemblances to the work of Dove, with its large awkward shapes, Judd's painting stays closer to the surface with less interest in the shading off of color into depth. In *Garden*, with its strips of asphalt black, its tiny green and blue lakes, or in *Welfare Island*, an aerial map in grays, blacks and grass greens, there seems to be less concern with the plastic effect of the paint and more interest in the imposition of strikingly bold design. Raisen, in contrast, is everywhere devoted to the paint itself, working his areas, by soft modulations of color, into palpitating surfaces and depths. Using a generally cool, marine palette, he presents a number of notable landscapes and seascapes, his *Landscape with Sea* in blues, purples and grays being a particularly fine example. (Panoras, Sept. 4-15.)—J.R.M.

**Gallery G. Group:** Opening the season with a well-selected group of artists, a number of whom are new to the gallery and who will have one-man shows later in the year, the gallery offers such vigorous talents as Lee Bontecou, whose sculpture, *Man and Woman*, in painted clay, gives the figures the appearance of having been built from metal plates seared to an ashen white. James F. Juthstrom's *Landscape—Red Sky*, solidly structured and rich in browns and olive green, is equally noteworthy, as well as work by Daniel Newman, Henry Niese, James Phillips and Walter Hahn. (Gallery G., Sept. 4-Oct. 5.)—J.R.M.



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Chaim Fleischman: GENESIS, at Fleischman Gallery.

**Fleischman Group:** A new gallery presents some impressive talents, among them Judy Blake, whose abstract *Landscape* in soft blues, grays, whites and reds is one of the outstanding works in the show, and Chaim Fleischman, whose *Genesis* is an equally good and vigorous abstraction in bright greens, whites, yellows and black. Mary Jaeger's predominantly pale blue *Separation into Elements* is also notable. Effective works are contributed by Mark Berger, Honora Kornberg, Hanni Berges Mandel and Frank Rampolla. The over-all competence of the work appears promising for both the gallery and the artists concerned. (Fleischman, July 19-Oct. 10.)—J.R.M.

**Sylvia Bernstein:** In her watercolors, Miss Bernstein turns her eye upon a number of subjects: bottles and fruit, windy hillsides, tattered posters as tenacious as lichens on old brick walls. Her touch is quick, facile and sensitive. But one wonders if her trick of splattering ink to give the appearance of a corroded surface serves her best interests. It often strikes one as a technique which is imposed upon each subject rather than one which builds naturally out of it. (Ruth White, Sept. 11-Oct. 6.)—J.R.M.

**Maurice Gordon:** Exhibiting work from over a number of years, Gordon shows oils which move from the tightly painted, rigidly structured style of *San Francisco Bay* to the loosely painted, more dramatically focused vision of *Cypress* or *Wire Cable on the Beach*, both of which rely upon the low, distant horizon of surrealist painting for much of their mood. One of the more pleasant works in the current show is his *Nova Scotia*, a group of pink, red and brown dories patterned against the black bow of a schooner. (Passedoit, Sept. 10-29.)—J.R.M.

**Morris Group:** A lively exhibition, including a number of artists showing for the first time with the gallery, it features some notable oils. Josephine Burns' loosely painted *Still Life with Pink Vase* in vibrant pinks, blue-greens and grays, and Justin Schorr's *Waiting* in dark varnished browns and blacks, its figure merging with the darkness beside an elongated table and a tiny bouquet, are two of the outstanding pieces. In the impressionist style, Jerome Burns' *Back Yard—White Plains*, in cool blues, greens and browns, and Joseph Burgess' vigorous abstraction, *Study in Red*, are also effective. Good works by Charles Foster, Montvel-Cohen, Alice Noera and J. F. Bielawski are included. (Morris, Aug. 6-Sept. 12.)—J.R.M.

**Adele Lewis:** In her first one-man exhibition, Miss Lewis displays a vigorous talent in a variety of media. Her more recent work is generally the strongest, and among the oils, her portrait, *Mrs. Freeman*, with its thick surfaces and boldly simplified design, its vivid oranges and greens, is particularly striking. Her woodcuts, however, maintain the most consistent level with a nice touch of awkwardness that keeps them from being merely "well-made." *Faded Splendor*, *Dining at the Asti* and *Steeple in Snow*, all from a series of New York vignettes, are especially pleasing. (Lewis Studio, Aug. 18-31.)—J.R.M.

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William R. Leigh: RAMPAGE, at Grand Central.

**William R. Leigh:** Leigh, who devoted his life in painting to the American scene, and more especially to the West, with his paintings of bucking bronchos, buffalo hunts and Indians, is represented by more than one hundred paintings and drawings in this anniversary exhibition honoring the ninetieth year of his birth. Included also are a number of oils and drawings from two African expeditions which Leigh took part in during the course of his long life. One approaches his paintings with much the same feeling that one takes to a Western movie, anticipating the excitement and adventure, knowing that the horses and the cowboys are exact replicas of the real things, glad for a while to escape the dull realities of dodging taxicabs on a busy New York street. (Grand Central, Sept. 25-Oct. 12.)—J.R.M.

**Terence Cuneo:** The red glare of furnaces and the confusion of machinery predominate in these illustrative oils of factory and industrial scenes commissioned by the Industrial Nickel Company. (Grand Central, Sept. 13-21.) . . . **Robert Paul Tosa:** The large, Villon-like drawings with their intersecting planes fare best in this exhibition. His paintings have a bold, personal sense of color. (Crespi, Sept. 17-29.) . . . **Arnold Bare:** For his first show, the artist exhibits tastefully designed, soft-colored oils, the best of which is *The Bird Cage* in tans, blues and purples. (Wellons, Sept. 4-15.) . . . **John F. Hopkins:** *Radar*, skeletal constructions against a Klee-like sky of cubes of various blues, is one of the more impressive works in this show of flatly patterned, bright-colored oils. (Eggleston, Sept. 17-29.) . . . **Nathaniel Dirk:** The fresh, vigorous attack accounts for much of the liveliness of these watercolors. There is something of the freedom and sprightliness of Dufy in a work like *Fancy Sails*, though the color is more full-bodied, less pure. (Wellons, Sept. 17-29.) . . . **Beatrice Riese:** Generally light, simplified shapes against dark, flatly painted grounds achieve some pleasant effects in these watercolors of musicians and interiors. (Morris, Sept. 24-Oct. 6.) . . . **Ranulph Bye:** A sense of atmosphere and mood, particularly in *Summer Mansion* or *Stover's Barn*, Erwinna, Pa., contributes much to the artist's second one-man show with this gallery. (Grand Central, Sept. 24-Oct. 5.) . . . **Nancy Dryfoos:** The small fully modeled *Torso* is one of the better pieces in this exhibition of sculptures in stone. (Wellons, Sept. 24-Oct. 13.) . . . **Village Art Center:** A summer members' exhibition of oils, watercolors and sculpture featured some good works, among the best of them J. Zarzeczny's oil, *Still Life with Green Bottle*, A. W. Jones' small, lushly painted *Late Afternoon* and E. Dickman's vigorous drawings. (July 30-Aug. 31.) . . . **Burr Gallery:** Donald Bloom is one of the more impressive talents in a generally good exhibition of paintings that includes noteworthy work by Joseph Rosen, Jacqueline Hudson, Ralph Reynolds, Annette Stowman. (Sept. 16-29.)—J.R.M.

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## WHERE TO SHOW

### NATIONAL

#### BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

17TH ANNUAL JURY EXHIBITION, Watercolor Society of Alabama, Birmingham Museum of Art, Nov. 4-30. Open to all artists. Media: watercolor, casein, gouache. Prizes. Fee: \$1 per entry. Entry cards due Oct. 15, work due Oct. 23. Write: Miss Belle Comer, Watercolor Society of Alabama, City Hall, 711 N. 19th St., Birmingham, Ala.

#### BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

9TH ANNUAL PRINT EXHIBITION, Boston Printmakers, Museum of Fine Arts, Nov. 20-Dec. 20. Open to all printmakers. Fee: \$3 for non-members. Jury. Prizes. Entry cards and work due Oct. 20. Write: Mrs. S. M. Rantz, Secretary, Boston Printmakers, 299 High Rock, Needham, Mass.

#### HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

47TH ANNUAL EXHIBITION, Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts, Avery Memorial, Dec. 1-30. Open to all artists. Media: oil, oil tempera, sculpture, etching, dry point, lithograph, wood block. Fee: \$4. Jury. Prizes. Write: Louis J. Fusari, Secretary, Conn. Academy of Fine Arts, P. O. Box 204, Hartford 1, Conn.

#### NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

32ND ANNUAL AUTUMN EXHIBITION, Art Assn. of New Orleans, Delgado Museum, Sept. 30-Oct. 14. All submittals exhibited. All media. Fee: \$5. Work due by Sept. 22. Prizes. Write: Exhibition, Delgado Museum of Art, City Park, New Orleans 19, La.

#### NEW YORK, NEW YORK

43RD ANNUAL EXHIBITION, Allied Artists of America, National Academy Galleries, Oct. 11-28. Open juried show as well as members' exhibition. All media. Fee: \$4. Work due Sept. 27. For information write: Miss Selma K. Sitton, 34-25 Crescent Ave., Long Island City, N. Y.

#### NEW YORK, NEW YORK

3RD ANNUAL, National Society of Painters in Casein, Riverside Museum, Feb. 3-24, 1957. Jury. Prizes. Work due Jan. 28. Write: Ted Davis, Secretary, National Society of Painters in Casein, 128 E. 16th St., New York 3, N. Y.

#### OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

2ND NATIONAL PRINT EXHIBITION, Bay Printmakers Society, Oakland Art Museum, Nov. Open to all artists residing in U.S. Media: all prints except monotypes. Jury. Prizes. Work due Oct. 10. Write: Secretary, B.P.S., Oakland Art Museum, 10th and Fallon Sts., Oakland, Calif.

#### WASHINGTON, D. C.

CORCORAN 25TH BIENNIAL EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN OIL PAINTING, Jan. 13-March 10, 1957. One of the two sections will be selected by a jury. Any artist in the U. S. may compete. The jurors are: Theodore Rousseau, Jr., Henry Clifford, Hermann Warner Williams, Jr. Prizes total \$5000. All entries due by Nov. 12. The exhibition—which will also include a section of invited work and an historical section of outstanding works exhibited in former Corcoran Biennials—will tour the country under the auspices of the AFA. For further information write to Biennial Secretary, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington 6, D. C.

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KANSAS DESIGNER CRAFTSMAN SHOW, Univ. of Kan. Open to residents of Kan. and of Kansas City area. Work due Oct. 15-17. Write: Marjorie Whitney, Chairman, Dept. of Design, Univ. of Kan., Lawrence, Kan.

#### LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

36TH ANNUAL EXHIBITION, California Watercolor Society, Los Angeles County Museum, Oct. 30-Dec. 11. Media: watercolor, gouache, pastel. Jury. Prizes. Work due Sept. 29. Write: Leonard Cutrow, 1007 Clark St., Los Angeles 46, Calif.

continued on page 62

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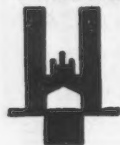
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#### WHERE TO SHOW

continued from page 61

##### MASSILLON, OHIO

21ST ANNUAL NOVEMBER SHOW, Massillon Museum, Nov. 1-30. Open to present and former residents of Ohio. All media. No fee. Judge. Awards. Work due by Oct. 27. Write: Albert Hise, Curator, Massillon Museum, Massillon, Ohio.

##### MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY

25TH NEW JERSEY STATE ANNUAL EXHIBITION, Montclair Art Museum, Nov. 4-Dec. 3. Open to artists born in or living in N. J. Media: oil, watercolor, drawing, prints, sculpture. Fee: \$1 per entry. Prizes. Work due Sept. 30-Oct. 7. Write: Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, N. J.

##### NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

14TH ANNUAL OPEN SHOW, New Jersey Watercolor Society, Kresge, Newark. Open to artists born or residing in N. J. Media: watercolor, casein, tempera, pastel. Fee: \$2 for members, \$3 for non-members. Jury. Prizes. Entry cards due Oct. 1, work due Oct. 10. Write: Miss Ruth M. Wolff, P. O. Box 25, Bloomingdale, N. J.

##### PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

PENNSYLVANIA GUILD OF CRAFTSMEN SHOW, Woodmere Art Gallery, Nov. 4-25. Open to Guild members. Fee: \$2. Jury. Work due Oct. 17-20. Write: Mrs. Ethel Hansen, 3453 Indian Queen Lane, Philadelphia 29, Pa.

##### PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

5TH OCTOBER COMPETITION, Berkshire Art Association, Berkshire Museum. Open to artists living at least one month of the year within 100-mile radius of Pittsfield. Media: painting, sculpture. Juror: Perry T. Rathbone. Prizes. Work due Sept. 22. Write: Berkshire Art Association, Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Mass.

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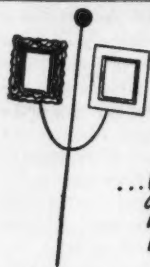
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### WASHINGTON, D. C.

64TH ANNUAL EXHIBITION, Society of Washington Artists, National Collection of Fine Arts, Oct. 7-29. Open to artists living within 25-mile radius of Washington. Media: oil, sculpture. Work due Oct. 2. Write: Mrs. Florence B. Higgs, Secretary, Society of Washington Artists, 4133 N. 25th St., Arlington, Va.

### WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

6TH ANNUAL STATE CRAFT SHOW, Florida Craftsmen, Norton Gallery, Nov. 15-25. Open to members of Florida Craftsmen. All craft media. Fee: \$2 (refunded if no work is accepted). Work due by Nov. 6. Write: Mrs. Bertha P. Anderson, 366 Alhambra Place, West Palm Beach, Fla.

## LETTERS

continued from page 5

think that in spite of his persuasiveness and in spite of all possible further elucidation, he would not have been able to hide the fact that he is not in sympathy with what is being attempted by most of the artists in the Stable Show. Nevertheless, he should have come clean. Not to be sympathetic and not to wish to make that clear mark him as not the man to have reviewed the Stable Show.

Harold Swartz  
New York City

### MR. KRAMER REPLIES:

Mr. Swartz's letter raises several interesting points, but it also raises a phoney one: whether or not I can "stand" abstract art. The issue is not, I should have thought, whether a work is abstract or figurative but whether it has some artistic vitality. I happen to believe that a great deal of current abstract painting suffers notably from lack of such vitality, but if I add that a great deal of figurative painting suffers from the same fault, I am merely saying what everybody knows. It seems to me perfectly legitimate to generalize—as I have done elsewhere—that certain habits of style developed in abstract painting in the last decade have had a debilitating effect on the art itself; but again, the same habits of style carried over into figurative painting do not suddenly assume new validity. Mr. Swartz does not strengthen one's confidence in his ability to make such distinctions when he says of three artists I mention in my article that "their work in this show is in a manner which has remained the same for as long as anyone can remember." Some memories are longer than others, of course, but it is only too clear that "manner" here means only "abstract" or "figurative" and nothing deeper about the work itself.

I hadn't counted up the number of abstract or figurative works in the Stable Show; it strikes me as a curious thing to do. I hadn't even made a count of the division in the illustrations for my article until Mr. Swartz sent his; for the record it should be pointed out that his count is wrong. I can't see any virtue in it, but the fact is that exactly half the illustrations are of abstract works.

As for Mr. Swartz's last point, my impression is that whatever else readers have thought of my criticism, they have never been unclear about its sympathies when it came to specific works.

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## STUDIO TALK

BY VINCENT LONGO

### *Collage Combined with Painting: Interview with Clinton Hill.*

**O**FTEN materials not ordinarily associated with art, but possessing a visual excitement of their own, will be the generative power behind new formal ideas that may occur in the ever changing relations between subject and object. Just as the newspaper clippings, fragments of wallpaper and simulated-wood-grain papers in the collages of Picasso and Braque aided the development of synthetic cubism, more recently the scissors-cut paper forms of Matisse, the strips of canvas and black asphaltum paste of Marca-Relli, even the found metal parts of Stankiewicz suggested new possibilities in their respective personal visions that could not otherwise have been achieved. Although collage combinations seem to be short-lived for the painter they open up areas of exploration by bringing new technical means into play. For a time it is as if the technique itself becomes the vision or at least the only way toward it.

So, too, in the work of Clinton Hill, a young New York painter whose major efforts are with oil on canvas, the collage has become an important means to fresh ideas. Attracted by unusually colored and richly textured papers used to wrap meats and groceries, the transportation tickets, and fragments peeling off old billboard advertisements in France and Italy where he traveled in 1951 and 1952, he began to collect and then combine bits and pieces of these with his gouache paintings, which replaced considerably his oil output because they were smaller in scale and more readily transportable during his travels. At first the pasted papers covered small areas in the painting scheme serving as textural interest, a change of pace to the painted surface or perhaps as an element of surprise to enhance the formal invention in the picture. It is this personal formal invention without reference to external objects, that most profoundly satisfies his creative urges and has become the basis of an exploration into himself, his images, his artistic potential. It establishes him not as an observer or recorder or commentator of outward reality but rather one who created another reality: that of the self reflected in the reality of the pictured image.

Gradually a "stock pile" of collage material was collected in Europe, and it continues to grow in his Manhattan studio. It now includes sheet music, colored tissues, rice-paper scraps, old diplomas and certificates, domestic and foreign wrapping papers, gold and silver leaf, construction papers, Arabic newspapers and a variety of ticket stubs. These inevitably become sections of gouaches. He rarely works entirely in collage. The collage technique is employed with, never instead of, the painting. Combining the found elements with traditional watercolors, inks, charcoal, tempera and pencil, he continually arrives at new combinations of materials that help to develop further a remarkable talent for spontaneous expression. His work either "comes off" during the first impulses or is discarded, washed off or covered to be used at a later time as another beginning. This makes it difficult at times to pin-point the actual beginning of a given work. His gouaches seem to be continually in process before the picture begins to emerge. Two or three attempts at one idea are sometimes washed off or partially covered and temporarily put aside to be used as a jumping-off point toward another. Yet his surfaces do not have a tired or too agitated look about them. His application of paint is always fresh, and the forms look as though conceived in a momentary impulse.

Not of little importance is Mr. Hill's ability to become intimate with a wide variety of materials, making them fit into his own esthetic order. Though he frequently buys the finest materials he can afford, he has no special fondness and does not make a fetish of expensive products and is as much at home on a paper-bag surface as he is with Whatman rag paper, sometimes using both in the same work. Recently, however, he has found frequent use for black Chinese Ink that can be purchased in tubes or sticks. Not as dark as the India Inks (Higgins, Artone and Pelikan) used by most artists, this ink may be thinned with

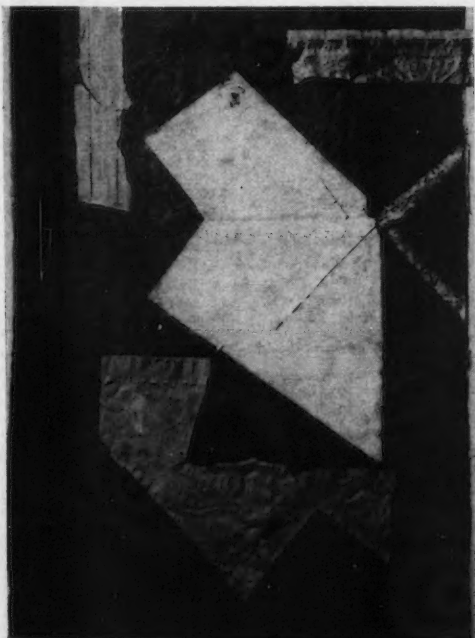


water to a very light gray or when just slightly thinned will offer a deep black tone. This ink has a soft warm quality that will not be found in other inks and is excellent for both pen and brush techniques. He also uses Higgins colored inks and Dr. Martin liquid dyes for transparent watercolor and Winsor and Newton Designers Colors or Linel Gouache colors for tempera work. Often transparent and opaque colors are used in the same picture. Crayon, chalk and charcoal will sometimes be included too, either to modify brightly colored areas, to create textures, or as in the case of white chalk, to cover colors that bleed through white tempera. Large blotters are also used to reduce color brilliance or to build up washes of transparent color quickly, avoiding the impediment of slow-drying washes. When pasting paper or cardboard, Mr. Hill most frequently uses a powdered wheat paste mixed with water. Or if he is not willing to prepare this he uses Higgins Vegetable Glue.

In *Collage 4/55* (see below) Clinton Hill rescued an old drop cloth discarded by some outdoor housepainter and used it as a ground. The surface of the cloth was entirely covered with a thickly incrustated red lead worn to a burnt orange minutely cracked from constant rolling and rerolling. Unfolding a seam along the side revealed a raw canvas section, discolored with age and wear. This became the dark vertical rectangle on the extreme left of the picture. A grocery bag cut and torn into various triangular or rectangular shapes was arranged and pasted on the ground. Creases and seams still remaining after reshaping were utilized as straight lines while thin lines drawn with charcoal repeated the linear pattern in other areas. A thin rectangular strip of gold leaf, its edges painted blue-green tempera, was pasted in a horizontal position on the upper right. The lower paper-bag shape was left unpainted—the subtle linear pattern of the paper still visible—and partly cut with scissors, partly torn to connect with the white form above it. The latter was painted over with white oil that allows some of the tan color of the paper to show through it. The dark triangular areas of the background which invade the pasted-paper forms are repeated and controlled by the bent white line at the right which was painted there with white oil paint. Even though the pasted forms are obviously put down on the ground they actually interlock with it, causing background and foreground to become one.

Economical means, misleadingly simple here, keynote the direct, often automatic approach of Clinton Hill to his art. Often, he first sees his work as an "outsider" not always sure what "the idea meanings of his images" are. It is more important for him visually to crystallize his experiences and feelings into forms that are as new to him as they are to the viewer of his work. For him, art experience inevitably precedes value judgment; understanding follows need; need motivates action.

Clinton Hill: COLLAGE 4/55, oil and paper, 19" by 26".



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# CALENDAR OF EXHIBITIONS

## ALBANY, N. Y.

INSTITUTE, Sept. 4-16: L. R. McCoy; Sept. 18-30: G. Greene  
ALBUQUERQUE, N. M. Univ. N. M.  
JONSON GALLERY, Sept. 2-29: H. Pearce

## ALLISON'S WELLS, WAY, MISS.

ALLISON'S, Cont. Paintings

## ATHENS, GEORGIA

MUSEUM, Sept.: E. Weisz Memorial

## BALTIMORE, MD.

MUSEUM, Sept. 25-Oct. 28: B. Hepworth Scpt.; Oct. 2-Nov. 4: Expressionism 1900-1955

## BELOIT, WISC.

SCHERMERHORN GALLERY, Sept. 8-Oct. 14: G. R. Bradshaw

## BEVERLY HILLS, CALIF.

GALLERY OF MODERN ART, 19th & 20th C. Fr. & Amer. Ptg.

## BIRMINGHAM, ALA.

MUSEUM, Sept. 9-23: Art Assoc. Show

## BOSTON, MASS.

DOLL & RICHARDS, Sept.: 19th & 20th C. Amer. Ptg.; Sept. 26-Oct. 10: Ancient Art Objects

MUSEUM, to Sept. 16: Onchi Memorial exhib.; W. G. Russell Allen prints; Tessai, Japanese pgt.

## CHICAGO, ILL.

ART INST., thru Sept. 30: Cont. Japanese Pottery; Student Exhib.; From Sept. 15: T. Webb, photog.

PUBLIC LIBR. ART DEPT., Sept.: L. Golub; S. Gordon

## CINCINNATI, OHIO

CONTEMP. ARTS CTR., Sept. 12-Oct. 4: Expressionism 1900-1955

MUSEUM, Sept.: Cont. Ital. Prints; Sept. 15-Oct. 22: Nolde & Kirchner Prints

## CRAIGVILLE, N. Y.

CROMLINE GALLERY, thru Sept. 9: H. Jackson

## DALLAS, TEXAS

MUSEUM, from Oct. 6: Exhib. of Presidents; Texas Ptg. & Scpt.; Architecture

## DAYTON, OHIO

ART INST., Sept.: Amer. W'Cols.; Circ. Gallery Additions

## DENVER, COLO.

MUSEUM, to Sept. 18: Santos & Kachinas; Oct. 1-Nov. 18: Turn of Century Ptg., 1880-1920

## DETROIT, MICH.

INSTITUTE, Sept. 21-Nov. 4: D. Oen-slager, theatre design

## HARTFORD, CONN.

WADSWORTH ATHENEUM, From Sept. 6: Camera as a Third Eye, C. J. Laughlin

## HOUSTON, TEXAS

NAT. BANK GALLERY, Sept. 5-26: Jewels of 50 Centuries

## LONDON, ENGLAND

GIMPEL FILS, Sept.: Group

HANOVER, to Sept. 14: Contemp. Sculp.

LEFEVRE, Cont. Brit.; 19th & 20th C. Fr.

## LOS ANGELES, CALIF.

MUNICIPAL ART GALLERY, Sept. 9-30: 1900-1930 Calif. Arch.

STENDAHL, Pre-Col. & Modern

## MANCHESTER, N. H.

CURRIER GALLERY, to Sept. 16: O. Kokoschka sketches for "Magic Flute"

## MANCHESTER, VERMONT

ART CENTER, Sept. 8-23: Orteig, Ryals, Eldredge, Shokler

## MILWAUKEE, WISC.

ART INST., Sept. 6-Oct. 3: 6 Centuries of Still Life

CHAPMAN LIBR., MILW-DOWNER, Sept. 16-Oct. 14: S. Grippi prints

## MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

INSTITUTE, Sept. 7-Oct. 9: Chrysler Collection

## MONTCLAIR, N. J.

MUSEUM, Sept. 9-23: C. Bodmer

## MONTREAL, CAN.

MUSEUM, Sept. 7-23: Canadian Artists Abroad

## NEW ORLEANS, LA.

DELGADO MUS., Sept. 9-23: E. Bronson, photog.

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### Museums:

BROOKLYN (Eastern Pkway), Sept. 5-23: Museum Schl. Alum Assoc. Juried Exhib.

METROPOLITAN (5th at 82), Sept.: Mod. Eur. Ptg. from N. Y. private collections; Italian Prints 1500-1550; German Prints & Drwgs.

MODERN (11 W. 53), to Sept. 9: 12 Americans; to Oct. 7: Matisse Prints; to Nov. 4: Textiles, USA

WHITNEY (22 W. 54), Sept. 19-Nov. 11: T. J. Roszak Retrospective

### Galleries:

A.A.A. (712 Fifth), Sept. 17-Oct. 6: Group

A.C.A. (63 E. 57), Sept. 4-18: D. Stein

ALAN (32 E. 65), Sept.: Opening Exhib. '56-'57

ARGENT (236 E. 60), closed to Oct.

ARGOSY (116 E. 59), Early American

ARTISTS' GALLERY (851 Lex. at 64), From Sept. 12: Reunion Group Exhib.

BABCOCK (805 Mad. at 68), Sept.: Amer. Ptg.

BARONE (202 E. 51), Sept. 4-14: "Chicago Sculp." Sept. 17-Oct. 9: Claudine

BARZANSKY (1071 Mad. at 81), Sept. 24-Oct. 6: M. J. Alexander

BODLEY (223 E. 60), Sept.: Unannounced

BORGENICHT (1018 Mad. at 79), Sept.: Group

BURR (108 W. 56), Sept. 1-15: Group; A. Lewis; Sept. 16-29: Fall Group

CAMINO (92 E. 10), Mid-Sept.: Members Group

CARAVAN (132 E. 65), Sept. 9-29: Group

CARSTAIRS (11 E. 57), From Sept. 10: Gallery Grp.; From Oct. 15: M. Goeritz

CHASE (21 E. 63), Sept.: Group Shows

CONTEMPORARY ARTS (802 Lex. at 62), Sept.: Group

COOPER (313 W. 53), Sept. 29-Oct. 24: D. Sarfaty

CRESPI (232 E. 58), Sept. 19-29: R. Tosa

DAVIS (231 E. 60), Sept. 28-Oct. 20: Artist as Reporter

DE NAGY (24 E. 67), Sept. 25-Oct. 13: Button; Clad; Kanowitz

DOWNTOWN (32 E. 51), Sept. 5-29: "Americans in Europe," pgt. & scpt.

DUEVEN (18 E. 79), Sept.: Old Masters

DUEVEN-GRAHAM (1014 Mad.), Sept. 25-Oct. 13: Fulbright Exhib., Mod. pgt. & scpt.

EGGLESTON (969 Mad. at 76), Sept. 17-29: J. F. Hopkins

EIGHTH ST. (33 W. 8), Sept.: Cont. Ptg.

ESTE (32 E. 65), Sept.: Dwg., W'cols. of 5 Centuries

FEIGL (601 Mad.), Re-opens Sept. 5

FLEISCHMAN (227 E. 10), to Oct. 11: "Selection Present Indicative"

FRENCH & CO. (210 E. 57), Works of Art

FRIED (40 E. 68), Re-opening Oct.

GALLERY G (200 E. 59), Sept. 4-Oct. 6: Gallery Group

JAMES GRAHAM & SONS (1014 Mad.), Sept.: Amer. & Europ. 18th & 19th C. Ptg.

GRAND CENTRAL (15 Vanderbilt), Sept. 13-21: T. Cuneo; Sept. 24-Oct. 5: R. Bye; Sept. 25-Oct. 12: W. R. Leigh

GRAND CENTRAL MODERNS (new address 1018 Mad.), Sept.: Group;

Oct. 6: Housewarming

HARTERT (22 E. 58), Sept.: Mod. Fr. & Amer., pgt. & dwgs.

HELLER (63 E. 57), Sept. 18-Oct. 6: H. Kallem, Ptg.

HERVE (611 Mad. at 58), Sept.: Chagall, Jansem, Campigli, Dre-dragomir, Gacus, M. Laurencin

HIRSCHL & ADLER (270 Park), Fine Paintings

JACKSON (32 E. 69), Oct. 1-27: Modern Art U.S.A.

KENNEDY (785 Fifth at 59), Sept.: Amer. & Marine Ptg.; Oct. 16-31: G. Catlin, Indian Ptg.

KNOEDLER (14 E. 57), Sept.: Hawk-kins

KOOTZ (1018 Mad. at 79), thru Sept.: P. Soulages

KOTTLER (3 E. 65), Sept. 10-22: E. W. Miles; D. Kehaya

KRAUSHAAR (1055 Mad. at 80), Sept.: 20th C. Artists

LILLIPUT HOUSE (231½ Eliz., by App't.), Sept.: "Lilliput's Little Museum"

LITTLE STUDIO (680 Mad.), Sept. 5-19: G. Russin; Sept. 26-Oct. 10: D. Berger

MELTZER (38 W. 57), Thru Oct. 1: Cont. Amer. W'cols.

MI CHOU (new add. 36 W. 56), Sept. 18: Group

MIDTOWN (17 E. 57), to Sept. 22: Group; Sept. 25-Oct. 17: Art in Interiors

MILCH (55 E. 57), Sept.: Amer. Ptg.

MORRIS (174 Waverly Pl.), to Sept. 22: Group; Sept. 24-Oct. 6: B. Riese

MOSKIN (4 E. 88), Sept. 17-Oct. 12: posters, pgt., dwgs., 20th C. Masters-Picasso, Giacometti, Stein-berg, Michaux, etc.

NAT. ARTS CLUB (15 Gramercy Pk.), From Sept. 12: J. Lewis

NEWHOUSE (15 E. 57), Sept.: Old Masters; 18th C. Fr. & Eng.

PANORAS (62 W. 56), Sept. 4-15: D. Judd; N. Raisen

PARMA (1111 Lex.), Sept. 14-29: Canadian Ptg.

PARSONS (15 E. 57), Sept. 24-Oct. 13: M. Liebman; E. McFadden

PASSEDOUT (121 E. 57), Sept. 10-29: M. Gordon, pgt.

PAVONE (127 Lex. at 29), From Sept. 14: Group, New & Old Ptg. Europ. & Amer.

PERIDOT (820 Mad. at 68), Sept. 10-29: Group

PERLS (1016 Mad.), Sept. 4-Oct. 6: Mod. Fr. Ptg.

PETITE (129 W. 56), Sept. 17-Oct. 3: Group

ROERICH (319 W. 107), Sept. 16-Oct. 14: M. Windsor; G. Winsor.

ROKO (925 Mad. at 74), Re-opens Sept. 10; Sept. 24-Oct. 17: H. Mandel

ROSENBERG (20 E. 79), Sept.: 19th & 20th C. Fr.; 20th C. Amer. Ptg. & Scpt.

SAGITTARIUS (46 E. 57), From Sept. 26: R. Fasola, plexiglass pgt.

SAIDENBERG (10 E. 77), Sept.: Mod. Fr. & Amer. Picasso, Leger, de Stael, Klee, others

SALPETER (42 E. 57), Re-opens Sept. 4

B. SCHAEFER (32 E. 57), to Sept. 15: Tapestries; Birds in stoneware; Sept. 24-Oct. 13: J. Girona

SCHAEFFER (983 Park at 83), Sept.: Old Masters

SCHONEMAN (63 E. 57), Sept.: Mod. Fr. Ptg.

SCULPTURE CENTER (167 E. 69), Sept.: Summer Series

SEGY (708 Lex. at 57), From Sept. 4: African Sculpture

SELIGMANN (5 E. 57), Re-opens Sept. 4

SILBERMAN (1014 Mad. at 78), Oct. 12-Nov. 10: Cont. Brit.

STABLE (924 7th at 58), Sept. 24-Oct. 13: K. Morris

TANAGER (90 E. 10), Closed to Oct.

THE CONTEMPORARIES (992 Mad. at 77), From Sept. 15: Europ. Oils with Related Graphics; Special Editions Grphcs. Grp. S. Davis, M. Avery, W. Barnet, etc.

TOZZI (32 E. 57), Med. & Ren. Art

VAN DIEMEN-LILIENFELD (21 E. 57), Sept.: Fr. Masters

VILLAGE ART CTR. (39 Grove), Sept. 10-21: W'col. Annual; Sept. 24-Oct. 5: Scpt. Annual

WELLONS (17 E. 64), Sept. 4-15: A. Bare; Sept. 10-22: E. L. Lewis; Sept. 17-29: N. Dirk; Sept. 24-Oct. 13: N. Dryfoos

WEYHE (794 Lex. at 61), Re-opens Sept. 3

WHITE (42 E. 57), Sept. 11-Oct. 6: S. Bernstein

WILDENSTEIN (19 E. 64), Sept.: Fr. Cont.; Master Drwgs.

WITTENBORN (38 E. 57), to Sept. 10: G. Honegger color lithos.

## PALM BEACH, FLA.

KAastra GALLERY, Cont. Ptg.

## PARIS, FRANCE

GALERIE ANDRE WEIL, Sept. 14-28: Ann C. Phillips

## PASADENA, CALIF.

MUSEUM, to Sept. 16: F. S. Wight pgt.

## PHILADELPHIA, PA.

PA. ACADEMY, Oct. 20-Nov. 18: Phila. Artists

MACK & SONS, Sept.: Y. Audette, W. Cantwell

SCHURZ FOUNDATION, Sept. 1-30: C. E. Brehme

## PORTLAND, ORE.

CERAMIC STUDIO, Sept. 12-30: J. B. Blunk

## ROME, ITALY

GALLERIA SCHNEIDER, Cont. Italian

## ST. LOUIS, MO.

MUSEUM, Sept.: Recent Print Acces-sions

## SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

DE YOUNG MUSEUM, to Sept. 14: J. WAYNE; from Sept. 18: M. Von Ridelstein; From Sept. 14: M. Graves retrospective

S.F. MUSEUM, to Sept. 23: A. Reveron retrospective

## SANTA BARBARA, CALIF.

MUSEUM, to Sept. 23: South Seas Art

## SANTA FE, N. M.

MUSEUM, to Sept. 30: N. M. Artists; Indian Artists

## SEATTLE, WASH.

FRYE MUSEUM, Sept. 1-21: 4 Cen-turies Europ. Drwg.

SEATTLE MUS., to Sept. 14: Design in Scandinavia; Sept. 21-Oct. 7: Museum Collection

SELIGMAN, Cont. Amer. & European

## SIOUX CITY, IOWA

ART CENTER, to Sept. 21: M. Karasz

## TAOS, NEW MEXICO

GALERIA ESCONDIDA, to Sept. 22: R. D. Ray, pgt.

## TORONTO, CAN.

CONTEMP. ART GALLERY, Sept. 14-Oct. 13: Tarascan Art of Anc. Mexico

## UTICA, N. Y.

MUNSON - WMS - PROCTOR INST., Sept.: 19th C. Amer. Ptg.; A. B. Davies, pgt.; dwgs., prints

## WAKEFIELD, R. I.

SPECTRUM, to Sept. 15: R. Lukosius, S. Smith

## WASHINGTON, D. C.

PHILLIPS GALLERY, Drawings & Prints

## WOODSTOCK, N. Y.

ARTISTS ASSOC., to Sept. 13: C. Walters; Sept. 15-22: Then & Now

## YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

BUTLER ART INST., Sept. 30-Oct. 14: J. Naberezny



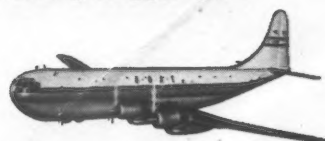


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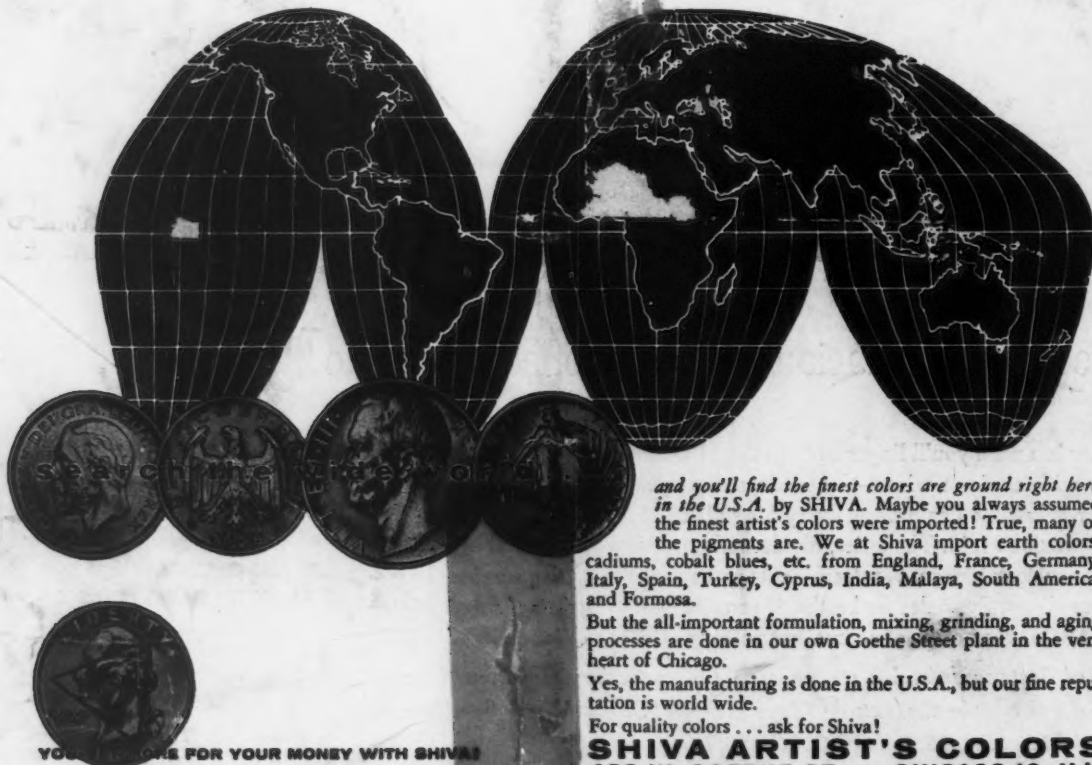
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